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Theatrum A
COMPARISON

Between the
Two STAGES,
With an
EXAMEN
OF THE
Generous CONQUEROR;

AND
Some Critical Remarks on the
*Funeral, or Grief Alamode, The False
Friend, Tamerlane* and others.

In Dialogue. *Ramble*

*Rari quippe boni numero vix sunt 10-
(tidem, Quot
Thebarum porta, vel divitis Ostia Nili*

Juv. 13 Sat.

LONDON: Printed in the Year
MDCCH.



LONDON: Printed in the
MDCCLXII

T H E

P. R E F A C E.

I Have undertaken a Task that's like
to raise me many Enemies; 'tis as
mad a Frolick as that of Catiline's
against Rome, or that of our Mo-
dern Kentish Catilines against the Senate
at London: If I had the Eyes of Ar-
gus, or the Hands of Briareus, I shou'd
have enough to do to combat so many An-
tagonists: The Players will tilt me; the
Poets will rail at me in dreadful Simile,
and blazon me in odious Character on the
Stage; the Criticks will damn my gentle
Raillery; the Audiences will hiss me;
the Wits will report me a Fool; and the
Women will have me duckt for a Scold:
The whole Society will be in Arms against
me; and poor Cornelius Agrippa had not
a harder Time on't with his Muster-roll of
Lawyers, Physicians, States-men, Astro-
logers and all the Host of his Mutineers,

The P R E F A C E.

than I am like to have: His Vanity of Sciences was not reputed more Heretical, than this Trifle will be. But let the Hunters hit me if they can; I have the same shelter the Fox had, when he hid his Head, and thought the rest of his Body safe; but if they find me out by the Tail, I expect to be us'd like a Beast of Prey.

The truth on't is, I have told my mind as freely as if I were dealing with my Confessor; I have not disguis'd a Thought, nor hid a Sin: I love plain dealing mightily; and have always been us'd to explain my self with as little Ceremony, as the Scarlet Gentleman on the Bench when he pronounces Sentence: Of all Shakespears Characters I like his Clown best; he always speaks Truth, therefore I'm pleas'd with his freedom; he shuns all Complaisance, therefore I doat on him for his rusticity: Methinks it comes nearest to Nature and Honesty; our Reason was given us to judge of Things, and our Tongues, to declare that Judgment: Art and Dissimulation came into the World when it began to be sinful, and they're now become so familiar to us, we hardly know 'em to be Vices: Like a certain Lady of late, that gaz'd so long on the deformity

The P R E F A C E.

*ty of a Man, that at last she lik'd him,
and took him for her Husband.*

But that the Reader may be a little prepar'd for what follows let him know—— that the Observations, which he will meet with here, are I hope, Just and Natural, perhaps they will be thought severe, but why shou'd not a Man speak Truth? If I have been too particular on The Generous Conqueror, you must know, That Play deserv'd no greater Civility; 'twas writ after an untoward manner, and above half the Town condemn'd it as Turbulent and Factious: I heard that before ever I saw it acted, therefore my Curiosity drew me to consider it more attentively, that I might inquire into what I heard so publickly cry'd down: Besides, I have heard some People speak in its Favour with so little Reason, that I cou'd not forbear undeceiving them. I declare sincerely I have no Malice (and I am sure no Envy) for the Author of that, nor indeed of any of the rest; but in an Age when the Printing-House is free for every body, why might not I write my Opinion, as well as he write a Play? 'Tis a time of notorious License, and as long as the Press is not interdicted, and no penalty for speaking one's Mind, where's the harm on't?

THE PREFACE.

on't? This induc'd me to give the Publick my Sentiments of this Tragedy, as to its Poetry, Politicks, and Morality: If my Talkers rally with too much levity, I desire it may be consider'd, that it was necessary to give 'em an Air of Mirth, that the Dialogue might run off the better: But I think I have not let their good Humour run them into ill Manners; and as to the Raillery—— it has always been the way of Satyr, and of the best Satyrists, Juvenal; If I may presume to name him on this occasion.

I have likewise added my Opinion of some other new Plays, and done it with equal Candor and Sincerity: I meant no body offence, I found diversion in the study, and then saw nothing in my Papers that might be ashamed of seeing the Light: I must confess, I have been very free with the Theatres, but I don't at all repent it: Their Distempers wanted the Incision Knife, and I have given it them.

But, indeed, the first temptation I had of spending my Time thus, was, the contemplation of our present Poetry; I believe it never was at so low an Ebb, and yet the Stages were never so delug'd: I am sure you can't name me five Plays that have

The P R E F A C E.

have indur'd six Days acting, for fifty that were damn'd in three: Just as in a time of a general Plague, almost every Man you meet has the Tokens of the Infection: They're no sooner out of the Cradle, but they enter into their Graves.

How this Apostacy happens is obvious enough; the division of the Houses made way for a multitude of young Writers, some of whom had nothing else to subsist on but their Pens; and I despair of seeing our Poetry restor'd, till I see the Houses united; for then the bad Plays may be shut out.

Some People find out a strange Reason for this degeneracy; they say Poetry has not been much encourag'd in the late Reign: But nothing can be more absurd: The People never were in a better Humour for Plays; nor were the Houses ever so crowded, tho' the rates have run very high, sometimes to a scandalous excess; never did printed Plays rise to such a Price, and what is more, never were so many Poets prefer'd as in the last ten Tears: If this be discouragement, I have done: On the contrary, the Poets have had too great an Encouragement; for 'tis the Profit

The P R E F A C E.

*fit of the Stage that makes so many Scrib-
lers, and surfeits the Town with new
Eighteen-penny Plays. This and the free-
dom of two Stages have serv'd Poetry,
just as the two Companies did the Indian
Trade, they have reduc'd almost to no-
thing.*

*I have no manner of Vanity for what
I have done, much less do I repent of it;
the Brat was begot between Jest and Ear-
nest; Idleness and Spleen were its Parents;
and there was not much more time be-
tween its Conception and Baptism, than
was necessary among the Jews to qualifie
a Child for Circumcision; its Birth has
been a little precipitate, but I hope, not
abortive; and because it was born in Obs-
curity, I commit it to the World to shift
for its self.*

A

A
COMPARISON
 Between the
Two STAGES, &c.

IN A

Dialogue between *Ramble* and *Sullen*, two Gentlemen, and *Chagrin* a Critick:

Sullen **T**HEY may talk of the Country and what they will, but the Park for my Money.

Ramble. In its proper Season I grant you, when the Mall is pav'd with lac'd Shoes; when the Air is perfum'd with the roſie Breath of ſo many fine Ladies; when from one end to the other the Sight is entertain'd with nothing but Beauty, and the whole Proſpect looks like an Opera.

Sull. And when is it out of Season, *Ramble*?

B

Ram:

Ram. When the Beauties desert it; when the absence of this charming Company makes it a Solitude: Then *Sullen*, the Park is to me no more than a Wilderness, a very Common; and a Grove in a country Garden with a pretty Lady is by much the pleasanter Landscape.

Sull. To a Man of your Quicksilver Constitution it may be so, and the Cuckoo in *May* may be Musick t'ee a hundred Miles off, when all the Masters in Town can't divert you.

Ram. I love every thing as Nature and the nature of Pleasure has contriv'd it: I love the Town in Winter, because then the Country looks aged and deform'd; and I hate the Town in Summer, because then the Country is in its Glory, and looks like a Mistress just drest out for enjoyment.

Sull. Very well distinguish'd: Not like a Bride, but like a Mistress.

Ramb. I distinguish 'em by that comparison because I love nothing well enough to be wedded to't: I'm a *Proteus* in my Appetite, and love to change my Abode with my Inclination.

Sull. I differ from you for the very Reason you give for your change; the Town is evermore the same to me; and tho' the Season makes it look after another man-

manner, yet still it has a Face to please me one way or other, and both Winter and Summer make it agreeable. The Summer like a wanton Girl may give me youthful Pleasure; and Winter like an aged Hermit, may give me Matter of Contemplation: And that variety which you speak of, is but Luxury and Vapour.

Ramb. Thou art a Heretick to all that's Orthodox; and I may as soon move one of the fixt Stars out of its Orb, as thee out of thy Opinion.

Sull. Not so neither: I have had occasion very often to change my Opinion; and because you were just now talking of an Opera, 'twas in a particular of that kind that I was at a loss what to determine.

Ramb. What doest thou mean?

Sull. I mean the perplexity I have been under concerning the Success of the two Play-houses. I have often wonder'd how they have so long subsisted in an Age so barren of good Plays, and in such a dearth of Wit; and when the wayward Humour of the Town makes it so difficult to please 'em long in any kind.

Ramb. Oh! If you are for a Controversie on that Subject, have at you—— I love and honour the Muses, and I think,

I can give as good an account of that Matter as another Body.

Sull. With all my Heart. Let's withdraw out of the Crowd and talk it over.

Ramb. Nay, there thou breakst my Heart; 'twill abate very much of my Eloquence if I lose the inspiration that the Sight of these Ladies may give me: But see, how very opportunely our Friend *Chagrin* comes to joyn the Discourse.

Sull. With such a Tempest in his Eyes he looks like the Picture of the wild Sea: he's the most untoward Wight—— such a peevish Splenatick Fellow, and such a Malecontent to all that's Poetical, I never see him but he puts me in mind of *Guido Faux* in the Ballet, with his lighted Match in his Hand going to blow up the Common-wealth of Wit.

Enter Critick.

Cri. Well Gentlemen, if ever I saw any thing so extravagant—— so ridiculous—— as this Medley of Fops and Fools, this *Olla podrida* of all manner of Garbage: Beau Soldiers, Town Beau's that will Sweat at the sight of a Sword, Country Beau's, Beau Citizens, and Beau Footmen; Women that look like Butterflies, Railleurs, Coquets, impertinent honest

honest Women, Whores and Chamber-Maids. Methinks the Mall now looks like a Miscellany of Poems; here's *Heroick*, *Pindarick*, *Burlesque* and *Doggrel*; there's stately *Homer* with his *Jupiter Altitonans*---; there's gloating *Ovid* squeezing his lewder *Julia* by the Hand; there's *Tibullus* talking smutt; there *Theocritus* is courting in Madrigal; and yonder's *Hudibras* Stalking by himself, as if no body knew how to value his Company.

Sull. Here is a very odd mixture indeed, variety of Faces and Fashions, of Humour and Opinion, of Principles and Consciences; such a discord of every Quality, and all so obstinate, that the place looks like the Government of *Amsterdam*, where for the convenience of the Publick, every one is free to be damn'd in his own way.

Ramb. You are both prophane; if your Saturnine Tempers can't digest this Gallantry, yet in good Manners you ought not to affront such a fine Assembly.

Cri. I hate Manners and all that belongs to 'em.

Ramb. I believe it, and at this time it makes you the fitter for our Company: *Sullen* and I are just entring on a Discourse of the Play-houses, and if any matter of Law arises, that grave Brow of yours shall decide it,

Cri. You could not chuse one who wou'd be less Ceremonious on such an occasion; for to tell you the Truth, I have so little regard for those inconsiderable Fellows, that I shall freely speak my Mind.

Sull. Let's walk on, and as we have chosen you Arbitrator, it shall be at your Pleasure to say where we'll go.

Cri. To the Thatcht-House, where I once gave the Drawers half a Piece to toss in a Blanket a pragmatrical Poet, who wou'd needs be reading his damn'd Verses to me.

Sull. Come on, I'll lead you. A Room here----, who waits here---- come Gentlemen, what Wine?

Ramb. I covet neither *Champain* nor *Burgundy*, give me either *Armitage* or *Florence*.

Cri. *Florence* be it.

Ramb. See here, Gentlemen-- the very Spirit of Nature, the only *Elixir Salutis*: This will keep us from the Devil and the Physician.

Cri. Let it go round----- in the Humour I am in, I cou'd quarrel with every thing but the Wine.

Ramb. Not with your Friends I hope.

Cri. Oh no; I never quarrel with my Friends: That were Sacrilege.

Sull.

Sull. I'm glad that Title preserves us: But now to what we were talking of. Has it not been your wonder *Crit.* as well as mine, That the two Theatres should hold out so long? even against such difficulties as seem'd to be invincible. The Emulation between 'em has now lasted Seven Years, and every body thought the Town wou'd long ago ha'determined in favour of one or the other: But in my Opinion, 'twas strange that the general defection of the old Actors which left *Drury-lane*, and the fondness which the better sort shew'd for 'em at the opening of their *New-house*, and indeed the Novelty it self, had not quite destroy'd those few young ones that remain'd behind. The disproportion was so great at parting, that 'twas almost impossible, in *Drury-lane*, to muster up a sufficient number to take in all the Parts of any Play; and of them so few were tolerable, that a Play must of necessity be damn'd that had not extraordinary favour from the Audience: No fewer than *Sixteen* (most of the old standing) went away; and with them the very beauty and vigour of the Stage; they who were left behind being for the most part Learners, Boys and Girls, a very unequal match for them who revolted.

Ramb. 'Tis true, the *Theatre-Royal* was then sunk into a very despicable Condition: Very little difference appear'd between that and the Theatre at the Bear Garden.

Sull. If you please, 'twas more like a Bear-Garden before; for they exercis'd neither Humanity to one another, nor to any body else that had to do with them.

Cri. As I hear, that matter is not mended yet.

Sull. Truly I hear very little said in its behalf; I hear a great deal against it, and that there is a very notable Difference between the two Houses, in point of Civility and good Treatment.

Ramb. As how, *Sullen*.

Sull. You must excuse that; the Gentleman gave it me as a Secret.

Ramb. Pho, prithee Man, we'll be as secret as thou canst be; come out with it.

Sull. Nay, its no great matter; but if the *Old-house* should hear of it, they'd swear 'twas a damn'd Lye; but I am satisfy'd in the truth of it: The thing is this; A Gentleman carry'd a Play there, a Day was appointed for the reading; a Dinner was bespoke at a Tavern for half a Score, at least that number came to judge his Play, tho' not three of 'em cou'd tell the difference between Comedy

dy and Tragedy ; in the reading of it (that is after Dinner) most of 'em dropt off, but two remain'd to hear it out, and then they walkt ; so that there was but the Gentleman and his Friend left, and not a Penny all this while paid towards the Reckoning. The Play was ordered to be Licenced, so that forty Shillings for the Dinner, and forty more for the Licence, made just four Pounds, so much it cost him already. This happened to be in Lent, and the Players having then the first Day of a Play given 'em, this was bespoke ; so the Author had the Mortification of having it acted in Lent ; but the Devil on't was, he was oblig'd to treat every one of his Players all the while it was in Rehearsal, to keep 'em in study, and in that exploit it cost him in Coach hire and Wine near ten Pounds.

Cri. The Devil it did.

Sulk. 'Tis certainly true : Well, his Third Day came, and a good Appearance there was ; I sat in the Pit, and I think I never saw better Boxes ; the Play came off pretty well, and the Poet was much exalted with so good an escape, for it was his first ; his Friends joy'd him when 't was over, and he thought he had now the *Indies* to receive : Pay-Day came, and what do you think he received ?

Cri.

Cri. Had he only a third Night?

Sull. No more, it lasted but four.

Cri. I suppose he paid the Charges?

Sull. That you may Swear.

Cri. Then he might receive----- the House was full you say?

Sull. Excellent Pit and Boxes, and I believe, full above.

Cri. Why then, He might receive Seventy Pounds; nay, I diminish it as much as I can, because I know their way of bringing in their Bills of Charges.

Sull. He received but fifteen.

Cri. 'Sdeath! How could that be? the Ordinary Charge is about four and thirty Pounds a Day.

Sull. But the extraordinary (when they please to make it so) is very extraordinary, without any Compass. They brought him Bills for Gloves, for Chocolet, for Snuff; this Singer begg'd a Guinea, that Dancer the same; one Actor wish'd him joy, and ask'd how he lik'd his Performance: Oh very well Mr. ----- I ought to gratifie--- another cries, Oh dear Mr.--- I never took so much pains in my Life; that deserves a Kiss and a Present; and the next Morning away flies another Guinea.

Cri. By this account you make him a loser.

Sull.

Sull. He really prov'd so; but being startled at so great a disappointment, he made it his Business to enquire into the Fraud; and he perceiv'd at last, that he lost one half by the roguery of the Door-keepers, and others concern'd in the receipt.

Ramb. Then he shou'd ha' put in Door-keepers of his own.

Sull. He found that too late, for this was his first Play: But whether 'twas owing to his care and his parsimony next time, or that the *other House* did him more Justice, I can't tell, but his next Play brought him in Six times what the first did.

Ramb. 'Twas acted at the *New House*.

Sull. Yes, yes, and Mr. *Batterton* did him (as I have heard him say) greater Justice than he expected.

Ramb. Well, but to go back----- you were saying, you wonder'd that *Drury-lane* House cou'd stand so long, considering all those disadvantages you mention'd; but you must consider too, that they were in possession of the Patent and the Stage, the other had neither; there was an immense charge to go thro' before they cou'd be settled to any purpose; and after that, there must be allowed some

some time to pay Debts contracted by that Charge.

Sull. 'Tis granted; and I don't wonder more that they both stood, than that either of them stood under such oppressing Hardships: But I must needs think, of the two *Drury-lane* had the hardest time on't; for how can a Stage Subsist without good Actors? As to the other; 'tis true their Charge was great, but we all know what means they found out to make 'em lighter, we know what importuning and dunning the Noblemen there was, what flattering, and what promising there was, till at length, the encouragement they received by liberal Contributions set 'em in a Condition to go on.

Ramb. In the mean time the Mushrooms in *Drury-lane* shoot up from such a desolate Fortune into a considerable Name; and not only grappled with their Rivals, but almost eclips'd 'em.

Crit. If the Town had been of my Humour, they shou'd ha' been both suppress'd; for I think one House too much, unless they gave us better Plays.

Ramb. Don't be too severe *Critick*; you know the New-house opened with an extraordinary good
 * *Love for Love.* * Comedy, the like has scarce been heard of.

Cri.

Cri. I allow that Play contributed not a little to their Reputation and Profit; it was the Work of a popular Author; but that was not all, the Town was engag'd in its favour, and in favour of the Actors long before the Play was Acted.

Sull. I've heard as much; and I don't grudge 'em that happy beginning, to compensate some part of their Expence and Toil: But the assistance they receiv'd from some Noble Persons did 'em eminent Credit; and their appearance in the Boxes, gave the House as much Advantage as their Contributions.

Ramb. Faith if their Boxes had not been well crowded, their Galleries wou'd ha' fallen down on their Heads.

Sull. The good Humour those Noble Patrons were in, gave that Comedy such infinite Applause; and what the Quality approve, the lower sort take upon trust. But this like other things of that kind, being only nine Days wonder, and the Audiences, being in a little time satiated with the Novelty of the *New-house*, return in Shoals to the Old: Some Poets of the first Rank still writ for the latter, and great care being taken to Act every thing as well as they cou'd, they rubb'd on with tolerable Success: After this,
they

they travers'd each other with uncertain Fortune, this sometimes up, and that sometimes down, so that 'twas hard to say which was most like to prevail.

Ramb. And by this time the Town, not being able to furnish out two good Audiences every Day; chang'd their Inclinations for the two Houses, as they found 'emselves inclin'd to Comedy or Tragedy: If they desir'd a Tragedy, they went to *Lincolns-Inn-fields*; if to Comedy, they flockt to *Drury-lane*; which was the reason that several Days but one House Acted; but by this variety of Humour in the Town, they shared pretty equally the Profit.

Crit. In my Opinion the People were not partial enough; if there was such an *equilibrium* in the two Houses, the Town far'd the worse for't; 'tis a sign they were both bad, and that 'twas time to Damn one of 'em: And Faith if it had once come to that, I shou'd very freely ha' given my Voice for *Batterton*.

Ramb. Your reason, Mr. Critick?

Crit. I'll give you my reason; but first let's Drink—— *Batterton* is a very honest Fellow, and has all along been bred on the Stage; he's not only a good Actor, but in the number of wretched Poets now a Days, he may pass, at least
for

for a good Judge of Poetry ; and I shou'd not ha' scrupled him my particular Favour, if he had not play'd the Fool, and writ himself.

Ramb. How? has *B.* writ any thing?

Crit. He has not only very frequently been dabbling among other Men's Works, but he has given us something of his own; that is, he owns 'em to the Stage by all manner of ways, but indeed, they are but alterations of other Men's Plays new dipt, and christen'd with other Names.

Ramb. Pray name one.

Cri. The *Vintner trick'd*: Or, a *Match in Newgate*. I take it to be *Marston's Dutch Curtezian* by the Title; another is, *The Amorous Widow*: or, *The wanton Wife*, lately brought on, and often acted.

Sull. I never saw either of 'em in Print.

Cri. No, he has more Wit than to print 'em; but the Stage has been dishonoured with 'em many a time.

Sull. Well, but pray give us your exceptions to t'other House.

Crit. In the other House there's an old snarling Lawyer Master and Sovereign; a waspish, ignorant, pettifogger in Law and Poetry; one who understands Poetry no more than Algebra; he wou'd sooner have the Grace of God than do every body Justice: What a Pox has he to do
so

so far out of his way? can't he pore over his *Plowden* and *Dalton*, and let *Fletcher* and *Beaumont* alone?

Ramb. I'll be hang'd but thou ow'st that old Fellow a spite; 'gad if one knew the truth, he has not us'd thee well.

Crit. I never had, nor ever will have any thing to do with him, nor his People Men or Women.

Sull. Well, good Language however, Mr. *Critick*; But besides, your Exception's naught; that Gentleman is not Sovereign as you call him.

Crit. No! Pray who is?

Sull. A Gentleman of superiour Quality, and a Gentleman of good Sense.

Crit. I know whom you mean, and I grant he has a Share in the Patent, but not any in the management of the House; for I tell you, the other is Monarch of the Stage, tho' he knows not how to govern one Province in his Dominion, but that of Signing, Sealing, and something else, that shall be nameless.

Sull. We'll spare you the explanation, *Critick*.

Crit. Nay, since you won't have it, I will tell you, faith and troth I meant a---

Sull. Hold——.

Ramb. Out with it, *Critick*.

Crit. Pox on't; the mentioning this Fel-

Fellow has almost choak'd me: Some Wine for God's sake.

Ramb. Let it be his Health then.

Crit. The Devil it shall; that were the way to confound my own.

Sull. I believe you had rather Vote for the *New Play-house* for the sake of Women there; they say you have not been altogether insensible that way.

Crit. Curse on 'em, they're grown so damn'd proud of late, because some Lords have done 'em the favour, that they'll not hear of a Commoner under worse Terms than a Settlement: Their Pride makes 'em set a high price on their Incontinence; and now an honest Fellow of the Town, may as soon prevail out of the front Boxes, as behind the Scenes.

Sull. But does that *Romantick Virgin* still keep up her great Reputation?

Crit. Dye mean her Reputation for Acting?

Sull. I mean her Reputation for not acting; you understand me-----.

Crit. I do; but if I were to be sav'd for believing that single Article, I could not do't: 'Tis all, all a Juggle, 'tis Legerdemain; the best on't is, she falls into good Hands, and the secrecy of the Intrigue secures her; but as to her Innocence,

cence, I believe no more on't than I believe of *John Mandevil*.

Sull. What think you of the renowned *Cleopatra*?

Crit. By that Nickname, so unfortunate to poor *Anthony*, as the other has been to many an honest Country Gentleman, I shou'd guess whom you mean.

Sull. You take me right.

Crit. In her time she has been the very Spirit of Action every way ; Nature made her for the delight of Mankind ; and till Nature began to decay in her, all the Town shar'd her Bounty.

Ramb. I do think that Person the finest Woman in the World upon the Stage, and the ugliest Woman off on't.

Sull. Age and Intemperance are the fatal Enemies of Beauty ; she's guilty of both, she has been a Riotter in her time, but the edge of her Appetite is long ago taken off, she still charms (as you say) upon the Stage, and even off I don't think so rudely of her as you do : 'Tis true, Time has turn'd up some of her Furrows, but not to such a degree.

Ramb. To the degree of Lothsomness upon my Faith ; but on the Stage I am willing to let her still pass for a *Heroine*.

Crit. And still off on't too, if all be true that's said of her.

Ramb.

Ramb. For my part, if I were to traverse the Compass round, I would not touch at her Point, I'd skip over that. But there is a little Charmer in that House-- a Creature so pretty, and yet so Civil; so wanton and so good Natur'd----- I have wish'd a thousand times that my other Senses were as well inform'd of her as my Sight; 'gad I'd mortgage some Acres to purchase her Demesne.

Crit. If she cou'd make you a good Title.

Ramb. I care not who had the Title so I were in Possession; but for the rest of the Women there, they are not worth an idle Hours Courtship.

Sall. Well then, what think you of the *Lurewells* and *Angelica's* of t'other House?

Crit. To my knowledge there are many *Lurewell's* among 'em, but not one *Angelica*: Many Punks, but not one honest Woman.

Ramb. There are some that wou'd be thought honest.

Crit. Yes, tho' they are Mothers and never were marry'd; 'tis an old trick.

Ramb. How can you prove that, Mr. *Critick*?

Crit. 'Tis as plain as a Red-Letter in the Almanack: They Trade like our *East-India* Ships, they take in their Lading

the beginning of Winter, and having calculated the Voyage just for Nine Months, it falls out very opportunely for 'em to unlade again in the long Vacation.

Sull. That is---- when the Town's empty, the Play-houses shut up; and a ramble into the Country for six Weeks brings it all about: The Lady lies in, the Child goes to Nurse, every thing is hush'd up, and she returns to Town again, and fancies no body knows any thing of the Matter.

Ramb. Are there any Examples of that kind, Gentlemen? 'fore gad I never heard any thing so whimsical,

Crit. Depend upon't, that to my knowledge there are, and very lately.

Sull. How? To your knowledge, *Critic*?

Crit. Ay, and to the knowledge of most who resort often to the Play: I have seen one of 'em cramp her Belly so confoundedly with her Stays, to hide it from the Audience, that when the Child has been born, the Jade had mawl'd it into such a deform'd condition, that the good Women have been frighted out of their Wits, and the Midwife her self has mistaken it for a false Conception.

Sull.

Sull. Why shou'd they use so much inhumane art to hide what in time must of necessity be discover'd?

Crit. They think not; and to this Day, after such an exploit as I have been telling you, one of 'em wou'd perswade the Town that she's an immaculate Virgin.

Sull. Ridiculous and foolish!

Crit. So that upon the whole I tell you, what for the Players, the Dancers, the Poets and the Masters, it's an easier matter for an honest young Fellow of the Town, to lose his own good Name, than to fix a scandal on one of theirs.

Ramb. Faith they'll thank you for that Complement.

Crit. I intend 'em no Complement: I only affirm that they're so taken up in their own Tribe, that there's no room for any body else.

Ramb. 'Twas the way of the Jews you know.

Crit. And they were Jews for this unrighteous dealing: But if by damn'd ill Fortune two or three honest Gentlemen are admitted, the Bastard, that perhaps the Player got, shall be laid to every one of these Gentlemen, and every one must compound at the full cost to maintain it; while the Mony is sunk by the mercenary

Mother, and the Child order'd to be smother'd in the Cradle.

Ramb. This is a good way to be Rich: Your simple marry'd Mothers are at a charge with their Children, but this a device to shift the charge to another, and to get Money by the Bargain.

Sull. Probatum est: I know one made two Gentlemen of considerable Rank pay a hundred Pound a piece towards her lying in and other Expences; and made each of 'em believe the Child was his own, till at last the two Gentlemen met by chance at her Lying-in Lodgings, and being intimate Friends found out the Cheat, and serv'd her as she deserv'd.

Ramb. But come, Sir,---- we digress, as this begun from the Comparifon of the two Houses, so we will resume that Subject.

Sull. Why then we'll proceed from the first Celebrated Comedy at *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*, and so hand 'em down rough as they run, good and bad, to this time; all old Plays, and all reviv'd Plays excepted.

Crit. Damn it, 'tis counting of Brass Money, five pieces of Gold may stand against a Horse-load of it: Why I'll maintain it, there have been in both Houses, since the Year 95, that is, since their

their division, above a hundred and three score Playes: Gad's my life, d'yee think I have the patience to hear 'em all examined, the very memory of 'em gives my Stomach the puke; nay, I wou'd not take the Profits of half of 'em but to hear 'em call'd over. Nay, don't stare Gentlemen, the Sum wou'd not be so great but I cou'd carry it all in my Pockets.

Sull. Come, *Ramble*, never mind him—he's as peevish as a hungry Judge that's to be troubled with a long impertinent Cause just when his Dinner's ready: Hold—— I have a Bookseller's Catalogue in my Pocket will help our Memories; now give your Attention.

Crit. Why, thou dost not know what thou'rt going to do; thou art going to persecute a poor Christian in a worse manner than ever *Dioclesian* did: If the Twentieth part of those Plays are worth naming, I'll be bound to hear thee out; it's like mustering an Army of *Muscovites*, where a hundred Men can hardly make one good Soldier.

Ramb. Begin----- Nay, turn thy Head this way, *Critick*, we must have your Observations.

Crit. I had rather be employ'd all Day long in counting the People that pass by here; faith 'twould be as profitable an

undertaking; I believe thou may'st lay the Devil with such a Task, as soon as by counting the Sands of an Hour-glass; nay, if you are resolv'd---- I'll try to take a Nap.

Sull. Imprimis, Here's Pyrrhus King of Epire.

Ramb. Whose is that?

Sull. Charles Hopkin's, an Irish Gentleman of good Sense, and an excellent Ovidian?

Ramb. What was 'its Fate?

Sull. Damn'd.

Ramb. The next?

Sull. A very good Wife.

Ramb. That's almost a Solæcism; whose is't?

Sull. Oh an excellent Author's! one George Powell's the Player,

Ramb. What was it's Fate?

Sull. Damn'd, damn'd, as it deserv'd.

Ramb. The next?

Sull. Cyrus the Great.

Ramb. Whose was that?

Sull. Banks's, which the Players damn'd and wou'd not Act of a great while, but at length it was acted, and damn'd then in manner and form.

Ramb. What's next?

Sull. Love's last Shift: or, The Fool in Fashion.

Ramb.

Ramb. Ay, marry, that Play was the Philosopher's Stone; I think it did wonders.

Sull. It did so, and very deservedly; there being few Comedies that came up to't for purity of Plot, Manners and Moral: It's often acted now a daies, and by the help of the Author's own good action, it pleases to this Day.

Ramb. Go on-----.

Sull. *The Country Wake.*

Ramb. Oh that's *Dogget's*: The Players have all got the itching Leprosie of Scribbling as *Ben. Johnson* calls it; 'twill in time descend to the Scene-keepers and Candle-Snuffers: Come, what came on't?

Sull. Not then directly Damn'd, because he had a part in't himself, but it's now dead and buried.

Ramb. The next?

S. The third Part of *Don Quixot.*

R. Oh the over-running Streams of *Helicon*! by all that's Poetical, my Friend *Durfey*; good lack! I thought I shou'd meet with him before we got half way: Well, in the name of Impudence, what luck?

S. Damn'd, Damn'd to all intents and purposes.

R. His *first* and *second* Part did well.

S. Thanks

S. Thanks to honest *Miguel Cervantes*, who gave him not only the Story, but the very Words.

R. Proceed to the next.

S. *The lost Lover*, or, *The jealous Husband*.

R. I never heard of that.

S. Oh this is a Lady's!

Crit. How's that? — *Andetq; viris contendere virgo?*

R. See how *Critick* starts at the naming a Lady.

C. What occasion had you to name a Lady in the confounded Work you're about?

S. Here's a Play of hers.

C. The Devil there is: I wonder in my Heart we are so lost to all Sense and Reason: What a Pox have the Women to do with the Muses? I grant you the Poets call the Nine Muses by the Names of Women, but why so? not because the Sex had any thing to do with Poetry, but because in that Sex they're much fitter for prostitution.

R. Abusive, now you're abusive Mr. *Critick*.

C. Sir I tell you we are abus'd: I hate these Petticoat-Authors; 'tis false Grammar, there's no Feminine for the *Latin* word, 'tis entirely of the Masculine

culine Gender, and the Language won't bear such a thing as a She-Author.

S. Come, come, you forget your self; you know 'twas a Lady carry'd the Prize of Poetry in *France* t'other Day; and I assure you, if the Account were fairly stated, there have been in *England* some of that Sex who have done admirably.

C. I'll hear no more on't: Come Sir, drink about.

R. To the Fair Author of the *Fatal Friendship*.

C. Ay, come; away with it, any thing that the Glass may go round. So—— now I'll make an end of my Nap.

S. And we'll go on. Observe, *Love's a Jest*.

R. What's that?

S. This is a *French* Author's, but his Thefts are from the *Italian*; 'tis good for little, so we'll pass it over. Here's another, *Amintas*.

R. What a Plague's that? A *Pastoral* I warrant; well, what became on't.

S. Oh Damn'd Damn'd! *Ibrahim*.

R. That's a Woman's again, I remember it; so ho! Mr. *Critick*.

C. For Charity's sake let me alone; I desire to have nothing to do with you nor them in this affair: Let 'em scribble on, till they can serve all the Pastry-cooks

cooks in Town, the Tobacconists and Grocers with Wast-paper.

S. *The Spanish Wives.*

R. That's the same Lady's, and 'tis a most damnable Farce. But the next?

S. *Mock-Marriage*, a young Fellows of the Town, a Retainer, and kind of Pensioner to the Stage.

R. What was it's Fate?

S. Damn'd, Damn'd: *Unhappy Kindness*, the same Author's, but every word stole.

R. The Success?

S. Damn'd. *Cornish Comedy*: No matter whose, 'twas Damn'd. *Neglected Vertue*, Damn'd. *Pausanias*, or *Lover of his Country*, Damn'd, tho' writ by a Person of Quality, and protected by *Southern Triumphs of Vertue*, tho' I think this no ill Play, yet 'twas Damn'd. *The City Bride*, by another *Player*, Damn'd: *Lady in Fashion*, by a *Player*, Damn'd: *Plot and no Plot*——

R. Hold, stop there: Count them we are past.

S. I have mark'd 'em with my Penfil as I went over 'em: Here's one, two, three, four, five—— here's just a Score, of which Number, *Eighteen* have had the Honour to be Damn'd.

R. A

R. A fearful Slaughter ! This is Decimation, hanging up all but the tenth Man : But to what you were saying--

S. *Plot and no Plot.*

R. Oh that's *Dennis's*; and a very regular Farce, tho' he calls it a Comedy.

S. I think it did pretty well; 'tis laboriously Writ, as every thing of his is: There's an Air of Formality in the Play agreeable to the slovenly Air in his Behaviour. But to go on, *Cynthia* and *Endymion*.

R. What a Pox is that ? I never heard on't.

S. I believe not; 'tis one of *Durfey's* Toys.

R. *Durfey's*? what again? 'twas but just now we parted with him.

S. Ay but Sir, you must know this is an *Opera*—— and as he tells us in the Title-page, design'd to be perform'd at Court before the late Queen—— there's for you; *Durfey* in his *Altitudes*—— but notwithstanding the vain and conceited Title-page, 'tis good for nothing within: He's the very Antipodes to all the Poets, Antient and Modern: Other Poets treat the Deities civilly, but Mr. *Durfey* makes the Gods Bullies, and Jilts of the chafteft Goddesses.

R. So,

R. So, I suppose that was mawld, notwithstanding the Honour which he says the Queen intended it.

S. 'Twas well for *Durfey* her late Majesty never saw it; Gad if she had, People wou'd ha' said, it had first been the cause of her Illness, and then of her Death; for 'tis a mortifying Piece o' my Word: Yes, yes—— it was Damn'd.

R. I'm glad on't; he deserves no better: But the next.

S. *Oronoko*:

R. Oh! the Favourite of the Ladies.

S. It had indeed uncommon Success, and the Quality of both Sexes were very kind to the Play, and to the Poet: No doubt it has Merit, particularly the last Scene; but 'tis as certain, that the Comick Part is below that Author's usual Genius.

R. I have a particular regard for Mr. *Southern's* Stile and agreeable Manner; there's a Spirit of Conversation in every thing he writes.

S. I think very few exceed him in the Dialogue; his Gallantry is natural, and after the real manner of the Town; his acquaintance with the best Company entered him into the secrets of their Intrigues, and no Man knew better the Way and Disposition of Mankind. But yet

yet I must say, his Diction is commonly the best part of him, especially in Comedy; but in Tragedy he has once in this, and in one other, Drawn the Passions very well. But to proceed--- *Heroick Love.*

R. That I think is Mr. *Granvill's*.

S. 'Tis so, and the Language is very correct: But with submission to him, his Fable is not well chosen; there's too little Business in't for so long a Representation: But if Mr. G. had taken the Story at a greater length, and contriv'd the Incidents to surprize, he had made it an admirable Tragedy.

R. Go on to the next.

S. *She Gallants.*

R. The same Author's, and a good Comedy, tho' it had the Misfortune to be ill receiv'd.

S. *Boadicca*; this is *Cha. Hopkins's* and did very well. *The Royal Mischief.*

R. Whose is that?

S. This is Mrs. *Manley's*; it made a shift to live half a dozen Days, and then expir'd.

R. The next?

S. *The Loves of Mars and Venus.*

R. I remember the success of that was owing to the Musick. Go on.

S. *The*

S. *The Novelty*; every Word stolen, and then Damn'd.

R. have you any more?

S. Oh a hundred in another Catalogue: Here's the *Innocent Mistress*; tho' the Title calls this Innocent, yet it deserves to be Damn'd for its Obscenity: *The Pretenders, City Lady, Lovers luck, Roman Bride's revenge, Beauty in Distress, Queen Catherine, Phaeton, Campainers, Intrigues of Versailles*, these two last *Durfey's* again; *cum multis aliis quæ nunc--* and so forth--all Damn'd, every Son and Daughter for ever.

Crit. I'm glad on't with all my Heart: Have you done?

S. Not done by above an hundred; but to tell you the Truth, I'm sick with so many Quotations; 's Death I fancy I look like a Physician that comes running out in great haste for a Mouthful of fresh Air, after garbling in Urinals and Close-stools: Give me room and some Wine for Heaven's sake.

R. One wou'd wonder how the Devil two *Theatres* shou'd stand so long, that are built with such rotten Stuff; they're flightier than the paper Buildings in the Temple.

S. Oh but they were not all of this sort; *Oronoko, Æsop, and Relapse* are Master-pieces;

pieces, and subsisted *Drury-lane* House, the first two or three Years: The *Mourning Bride*, *Sham Doctor*, and the *Provok'd Wife* kept up the *other* at the same time: And of latter Years there have been now and then a Play worth seeing. But these good ones are like Ore in the Mine, you must pass thro' a deal of Rubbish before you come to the Mettal.

Crit. Right, right, and even that Ore has a great deal of Dross too.

Ramb. Men of your splenatick Complexion will let nothing pass till you have tainted it: You are as inconvenient in the Common-wealth of Wit, as Flies in the Butcher's Shambles, you corrupt every thing you breath upon.

Cri. You are mistaken, if you mean by Men of my Complexion, such who are willing to find a fault where there is one, I must answer for those Persons, that they are as useful to the Common-wealth, as a Licenser to the Press, or a Committee of Elections to the House of Commons.

Sull. Come Gentlemen; let the Dispute end there, and let us return to the Consideration of the two contending Stages; we must thus far consider, that they are pretty equal, as to the number of good and bad Plays. But now comes the great

D

Turn

Turn which seem'd to decide the Fates of *Rome* and *Carthage*: The *old House* have a Bawble offer'd 'em, made out of *Fletcher's Island Princess*, sometime after alter'd by *Mr. Tate*, and now erected into an Opera by *Motteux*: The Actors labour at this like so many Galley Slaves at an Oar, they call in the Fiddle, the Voice, the Painter, and the Carpenter to help 'em; and what neither the Poet nor the Player cou'd do, the Mechanick must do for him: The Town had seen their best at the Drama; and now, I was going to say, the House look'd like a brisk Highway-man, who consults his Perruke-maker about the newest Fashion an Hour before his Execution; this new fangled Invention was a melodious Whim--

Ramb. How? new fangled *Mr. Sallen*? you forget the *Prophetess*, *King Arthur*, and the *Fairy Queen*.

Sull. I remember 'em; and pray are not they new? nay, if you go to the utmost of it's Antiquity, it came from no elder a House than *Davenant's*, and that's new enough of all-Conscience: but as I was saying-- the Opera now possesses the Stage, and after a hard struggle, at length it prevail'd, and something more than Charges came in every Night: The Quality, who are
always

always Lovers of good Musick, flock hither, and by almost a total revolt from the other *House*, give this new Life, and set it in some eminency above the *New*; this was a sad mortification to the old Stagers in *Lincolns-Inn-fields*, but at length they too--

Cri. Nay, there I will prevent you good Mr. *Sullen*; I must have the Honour of this Speech. At last, (as you say) the old Stagers moulded a piece of Pastry work of their own, and made a kind of Lenten Feast with their *Rinaldo* and *Armida*; this surpriz'd not only *Drury-lane*, but indeed all the Town, no body ever dreaming of an *Opera* there; 'tis true they had heard of *Homer's* *Illiads* in a Nut-shell, and Jack in a Box, and what not? but where's the wonder? why such amazement? I have seen the Creation of the World, *Alexander's* Exploits, *Robin Hood* and *Little John*, and I don't know how much, all epitomiz'd into a Rarre-show, carry'd about on a Man's Head: Nay, a certain Bard (whom you just now nam'd) tells us of a famous Mathematician who drew the whole World on a Cherry-stone; nay, did it so gingerly, that every Country might be seen upon't as plain as *St. Pauls* in the great Map of *London*.

Sull. Well, with this Vigary they tug'd a while, and *The Jolly--- Jolly breeze--- came whistling thro'---* all the Town, and not a Fop but ran to see the *Celebrated Virgin* in a Machine; there she shin'd in a full Zodiack, the brightest Constellation there; 'twas a pleasant Reflection all this time to see her scituated among the Bulls, Capricorns, Sagittaries, and yet the *Virgo* still remain *intacta*; but as she her self says, if she had to do with any thing but an Astronomer, that cou'd never be.

Cri. But this merry Time lasted not always; every thing has an end, and at length down goes *Rinaldo's* enchanted Mountain; it sunk as it arose, by Magick, and there's now not so much as a Mole-hill seen on't: What a severity was this? that the Labour of such a gigantick Poet, nay Critick, shou'd give up the Ghost so soon: The renown'd Author thought himself immortal in that Work, and that the World was to last no longer than his *Rinaldo*; and tho' he stole every thing from the *Italian*, yet he said, what the *Italian* did was but *Grub-street* to his.

And now I have mention'd this Fairy, give me leave to examine his Merit a little further: 'Tis pitty such a petulant Critick shou'd go off without a Complement,

ment, and since I am in the Humour, I must needs Complement him with the Success of his laborious *Iphigenia*: Ay, here's a Tragedy with a witness-- *show a more tragick Poet if you can*--- 'twas a smart *Epilogue*. But I marvel a Man of Mr. *Dennis's* Penetration wou'd suffer, nay beg his Friend to Burlesque him at that unreasonable rate: But the Author was conscious the Audience might mistake it for a Comedy, and so he gets *Colonel C.* (he was sure his Word wou'd be taken) to tell 'em it was not a Comedy but a Tragedy: The hint was good and necessary, for o' my word very few knew what to make of it before, tho' there were many TREMENDOUS things in't; but if there be any thing of Tragedy in't it lies in that word, for he is so fond of it, he had rather use it in every Page, than slay his belov'd *Iphigenia*.

Ramb. Nay, now Gentlemen, I will have my Criticism too, and mine shall be on the *Preface*, which I assure you is an extraordinary Composure: I thought the Man in a passion, but there was no such thing; the Man was in an Extasy, for he told a Friend of his, that he never before observ'd such a Hum in the Audience (that was his word) as there was at the hearing one of his Scenes; nothing but

Amazement, downright Stupefaction! Surprize and Astonishment! Nay, such a thing had never happen'd since *Thespis* rode in a Cart, unless once at one of *Corneill's*, who by the by, was of his intimate Acquaintance; (for continues he) I had one Day the honour to sit by that famous Author at a Tragedy of his in *Paris*, and by and by comes such a turn, that the People murmur'd again they were so surpriz'd; Oh very fine! by all my Ancestors, the Poets, I never heard any thing so fine, unless tother day at mine. But the best Jest of all the Preface is, he tells one of the first *Peers* of the Nation, that truly he was mistaken, he understood not the *Catastrophe* of his Play, for, says he, *your Grace* must excuse me, I have been Twelve Months considering on't, and am sure, say what you will, I have done it very nicely.

Crit. Well, let him go till we hear from him again, and now let's go back to *D. Lane*, where just such another Hero struts in his Buskins.

This Forreign Author, having a plaguy deal of spite in him, Clubs with an honest Gentleman to write a Tragedy on the same Subject: I don't say the Story was the same, because indeed they are direct-

directly contrary: Why, so were the Stages, *Ergo*, so should the Plays be. This Amphibious Author, half *English*, half *French*, looks over his own *French Dictionary*, and finds *Madam Iphigenia* very much degraded in t'other Play; she scorn'd to escape from the Sacrifice; she was an errant Termagant, and wou'd dye when she was in the Humour; and why a dickins shou'd Mr. *Dennis* use her so very barbarously as to give her Life: No, I'll prove it to his Face and the World's, that *Madam Iphigenia* dy'd in *Aulis*, and all the Town shall know it; besides, his Poetry is stark naught, and I'll make it appear by comparing it with mine, and you shall see how Mr. C----- and I will mawl him: So he falls to't, and being a little cripled in the first Act, he makes a Crutch of his Friend, and so as the Proverb runs--- Mr. C----- *helps a lame D--- over the Stile.*

Ramb. Oh fye, Mr. *Critick*, what a Comparison was that!

Crit. With much ado the work was done, and this was acted upon the Heels of the other. This was damnable foul Play you'll say, and the pride of the first *Iphigenia* receiv'd no small Mortification, to see an Upstart write directly counter to him, and dreadful work was like to

insue. Then it was, that the Preface to *Iphigenia in Tauris* was expected by every body, to be sent out in the form of a Challenge, and I have been told, that the Author had some Sentiments of that kind, not of the Pen, but of the Sword; but he remembred, that by the Law of *Athens*, the *Poets*, his Predecessors, were exempted from the Wars, and in that discreet Humour he said no more of the Matter.

Sull. Then comes the second *Iphigenia* in all her Charms, and like a superiour Mistress was resolv'd to eclipse her Rival: No cost was spar'd by the Masters, nor toil by the Actors; the Town was bespoke in its favour, and all the Friends of this new *Fletcher* and *Beaumont* were engaged to clap it. She appear'd, but what pity 'twas (as the Prefacer says) that a Play which had such a glorious run shou'd in four Days disappear, never to rise again. Oh! says Mr. D-----, mine was acted six Days; and I'll hold you a hundred Pound---- just what I got by't----- How's that, says *Boyer*? I say, Sir, that I'll hold you, or any Man, a hundred Pound, 'twill be acted again ten times this Winter: With that B----- fell a laughing, and replies, Sir, says he, I'll stake my *French Dictionary* against
your

your *Criticisms* on Blackmore, and that I think is odds enough---- I say, I'll hold you that Bet, that you did not get fifty Shillings by't, and that the House lost a hundred Pound. This had like to ha'made sad work; but all was well, for neither of 'em have been acted since, for they both sleep in everlasting Tranquillity.

Ramb. After this trial of skill between the two Houses and the two Poets, things return'd to their former Posture; the Stages were still upon the square, both losers by their *Iphigenia's*, and many a hearty Curse came secretly from their Hearts: But as bad as the case was, they resolve to run it out, and new Plays came still crowding in, every fresh Author being in halt to be damn'd with those that went before; and so it fell out, for few outliv'd three Days.

Sull. But to prevent this heavy Calamity, *Batterton*, being a cunning old Fox; bethought himself of a Project, whereby he might be rid of this beggarly Trade, and 'twas a sure way to save the third Night to himself; he enters his Clofset, and falls down on his Knees, and Prays.

O Shakespear, Shakespear! *What have our Sins brought upon us! We have renounc'd the wayes which thou hast taught us, and are degenerated into Infamy and Corruption: Look down from thy Throne on Mount Parnassus, and take commiseration on thy Sons now fallen into Misery: Let down a Beam of thy brightness upon this our forlorn Theatre; let thy Spirit dwell with us, let thy Influence be upon our Poets, let the Streams of thy Helicon glide along by Lincolns-Inn-Fields, and fructifie our Soil as the Waters of the Nile make fruitful the barren Banks of Egypt.* He rose, and rose much comforted: With that he falls to work about his Design, opens the Volume and picks out two or three of *Shakespears* Plays; and now, says he, I'll seague it away ifaith: Blessed be the Relicks of this Saint; they're more precious than those at *Loretto*, and a Penny that comes in from so pious a Shrine must needs prosper. The whim fell in very luckily with the humour of the People, and every body run now to renew their acquaintance with *Shakespear*.

Crit. I think the People were never more in the right; for no Author ever writ with that Felicity, or had such a prodigious compass of Thought; and tho' some of those Plays that *Batterton* Acted

Acted were Historical, and consequently highly irregular, yet they never fail'd to please; tho' its one of the hardest things in the World to make an Historical Play diverting.

Sull. Well, this lucky hit of *Batterton's* put *D. Lane* to a non-plus; *Shakespeare's* Ghost was rais'd at the New-house, and he seem'd to inhabit it for ever: What's to be done then? Oh, says *Rich* I'll pray as well as he--- What? Shall a *Heathen Player* have more Religion than a *Lawyer*? No, it shall never be said--- with that *Mr. R---* goes up to the Garret (a pair of Stairs higher than his own Apartment) and taking *Ben. Johnson's* Picture with him, he implores—

Most mighty Ben! Father of the Stage, and Parent of the whole Dramatick Generation! May it please thy venerable Shade to cast an Eye on the unhappy Circumstances of thy Children: May it please thee to bedew the Sands of our scorcht Lybia, and bless the stubborn Earth till it raises up some nourishment for us who hunger: 'Tis hitherto an accursed Land, nothing but Monsters shoot forth from its Bowels, till its now become the Habitation of every Creature but those of thy own making: How long must it thus continue? Oh let
it

it never be reproach'd to us, that we are such Backsliders from thy Laws; therefore we implore thee, that thy Grace may issue down like Mahomet's Dove upon the Musselmen of thy Sanctuary, and this is all we ask thee-----. The Picture seem'd to Nod, which was a token of consent, up he rose, and very devoutly return'd the charitable Image to its place in his own Theatre. Then they fell to task on the Fox, the Alchymist, and Silent Woman, who had lain twenty Years in Peace, they drew up these in Battalia against Harry the 4th and Harry the 8th, and then the Fight began. Now do you proceed----

Crit. The Battel continued a long time doubtful, and Victory hovering over both Camps, Batterton Sollicits for some Auxiliaries from the same Author, and then he flanks his Enemy with Measure for Measure.

Ramb. According to the letter.

Cri. Nay then, says the whole party at D. Lane, faith we'll e'en put the Pilgrim upon him---- ay faith, so we will, says Dryden, and if you'll let my Son have the Profits of the Third Night, I'll give you a Secular Mask: Done, says the House, and so the Bargain was struck.

Sull. This was excellent Sport.

Ramb.

Ramb. Faith and so it was : But, Gentlemen—— I have waited very patiently a great while for my turn, and now I have it, I'gad I'll keep it; and as you have been moralizing on the management of their Plays, I'll have a touch at their *Singing and Dancing.*

Sull. That I had forgot indeed. *Dum vitant Stulti vitia*—— you know what *Horace* says——.

Cri. Well remembred i'faith: If we had left out those unnatural Ornaments, we had rob'd 'em of their chief Support; 'tis the very staple Commodity of the Stage.

Ram. I'gad the Arguments mine, and I'll have it, Ha, ha, ha: Why its one of the pleasantest Farces they have, and many a damnable Play has been sav'd by't.

Crit. 'Tis ridiculous enough of all Conscience; that the Poets Wit shou'd lye in the Dancers Heel; it gives me a sort of nonsensical reason why *Pegasus* is said to be the Poets Horse; I perceive 'twas for his activity and capring.

Sull. And when the Poets Wit lies in the Singer's Voice, what shall we say to that?

Cri. The Reason for that is just of a piece with t'other; the Singer's Voice makes

makes Musick; Muse and Musick are synonymous Terms; so the Musick which proceeds from the Singer, may be understood to proceed from the Muse.

Ramb. That's ill Logick, *Critick.*

Crit. 'Tis well enough for the Cause: And so of the Bow-stick, and the fine Finger on the Harpsicord, they're all Brothers and Sisters to the Quill in the same Sense with the other, that is, they're all of one Alliance. In short, it has been one of the most scandalous Practises of the Stage; and I look upon the *Drama* to be in a very wretched condition, when it can't subsist without those absurd and foreign Diversions.

Ramb. Sir, you have nothing to do with this Argument; pray let me alone with't—I'll run it at *Newmarket* with the swiftest Horse there—'gad and I'll ride it to death but I'll have my Jest.

Sall. It has always been the Jest of all the Men of Sense about Town; not that the Fellows perform'd ill, for in their way they did admirably; but that the Stage that had kept it's purity a hundred Years (at least from this Debauchery) shou'd now be prostituted to Vagabonds, to Caperers, Eunuchs, Fiddlers, Tumblers and Gipsies.

Crit.

Crit. Oh what a charming Sight 'twas to see *Madam*—— What a pox d'ee call her—— *the high German Buttock*--- swim it along the Stage between her two Gipsie Daughters: they skated along the Ice so cleaverly, you might ha' sworn they were of right *Dutch* extraction.

Sull. And the *Sieur Allard*——.

Cri. Ay, the *Sieur* with a pox to him--- and the two *Monseurs* his Sons--- Rogues that shew at *Paris* for a Groat a piece, and here they were an entertainment for the Court and his late Majesty.

Ramb. Oh——— *Harlequin* and *Scaramouch*.

Cri. Ay; What a rout here was with a Night piece of *Harlequin* and *Scaramouch*? with the Guittar and the Bladder! What jumping over Tables and Joint-Stools! What ridiculous Postures and Grimaces! and what an exquisite Trick 'twas to straddle before the Audience, making a thousand damn'd *French* Faces, and seeming in labour with a monstrous Birth, at last my counterfeit Male Lady is delivered of her two Puppies *Harlequin* and *Scaramouch*.

Sull. And yet the Town was so fond of this, that these Rascals brought the greatest Houses that ever were known: 'Sdeath I am scandaliz'd at these little things;

things; I am asham'd to own my self of a Country where the Spirit of Poetry is dwindled into vile Farce and Foppery.

Ramb. But what have you to say to *Madam Ragonde* and her *Eight Daughters*? I assure you I think *Nivelong* a very humorous Dancer.

Sall. Not quite so ridiculous as t'other, but altogether as unnecessary: Some things by the courtesie of *England* may be forgiven tho' not justify'd; a Song or a Dance may be introduced into a Play as a part of the Play; there ought to be some connexion and affinity between 'em; but when these are lug'd in by the Head and Shoulders without any relation to the Play, I take 'em to be unnatural and monstrous.

Cri. I'll tell you, Gentlemen, what I have known in my time: The late *Duke of Monmouth* was a good judge of dancing, and a good Dancer himself; when he returned from *France*, he brought with him *St. Andre*, then the best Master in *France*: The *Duke* presented him to the Stage, the Stage to gratifie the *Duke* admitted him, and the *Duke* himself thought he wou'd prove a mighty advantage to 'em, tho' he had no body else of his Opinion:

A

A Day was publish'd in the Bills for him to dance, but not one more, besides the *Duke* and his Friends came to see him; the reason was, the Plays were then so good, and *Hart* and *Mohun* acted 'em so well, that the Audience wou'd not be interrupted for so short a time tho' 'twas to see the best Master in *Europe*.

Sall. 'Twas otherwise lately with *Balon*; the Town ran mad to see him, and the prizes were rais'd to an extravagant degree to bear the extravagant rate they allow'd him.

Cri. 'Tis that I lament; 'tis an evident sign of the degeneracy of our Plays.

Ramb. But above all commend me to *Signior Clemente*—— he got more by being an *Eunuch* than if he had the best Back in Christendom; the Ladies paid more for his *Caponship* than they wou'd ha' done for his virility.

Cri. I never knew the Ladies so far out of their Wits; they used to have some regard for a Man's Capacity another way: The Cry used to run, like the Ladies against *Horner in the Country Wife*, *Oh fie upon him filthy Fellow*—— *nasty Fellow*—— good *Sr. Thomas* don't leave us with this Sign of a Man
E here,

here, this no Man: An Hermophrodite with two Sexes is better than he, he has no Sex at all.

Sull. But this Evil increases upon us every Day; there are more of the *Circumcision* come over lately from *Italy*.

Cri. Nay the frolick will go on that's certain: The Women have been hewn down by brawny Soldiers all the War; and for variety they'll now take up with Boys. We are so fond of every thing that comes from *France* or *Italy*, 'tis God's Mercy we han't their Religion.

Ramb. O'lard! if they wou'd send over their *Pope*, we shou'd have rare Sport: The *Pope* and the *Cardinals* wou'd make the finest Scene in the World; what running there wou'd be from all Parts to see the *Conclave* kept in *Drury-lane* or *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*! Or at *Charing-Cross* with the Tyger; or in *Fleet-street* with the Elephant: But if Mr. *Rich* had 'em, what an Emperor wou'd he think himself with all St. *Peter's* Patrimony, his *Holineß* and all his *red Hats* in Pension.

Sull. But as I was saying— sometimes a Song or a Dance may be admitted into a Play without offending our Reason: I won't say it is at any time necessary, for some of our best Tragedies

gedies have neither: But perhaps it may be done without offence, sometimes to alleviate the attention of the Audience, to give the Actors time and respite, but always with regard to the *Scene*; for by no means must it be made a business independent of that: In this particular our *Operas* are highly criminal, the Musick in 'em is for the most part an absurd Impertinence; for instance, How ridiculous is it in that Scene in the *Prophetess*, where the great Action of the *Drama* stops, and the chief Officers of the Army stand still with their Swords drawn to hear a Fellow Sing-- *Let the Soldiers rejoice—* 'faith in my mind 'tis as unreasonable as if a Man shou'd call for a Pipe of Tobacco just when the Priest and his Bride are waiting for him at the Altar. The Examples are innumerable, no *Opera* is without 'em, tho' perhaps these may find a better excuse for 'em than Tragedies, because the Musick in these is the chief Entertainment; but for all that, I see no reason why the *Drama*, by much the nobler part, nay the Parent of the other, shou'd be made a Bawd to set off the musick; and I'm directly of Opinion, that even in *Operas* the Musick and the rest of the pageantry is a Vice wherever 'tis improperly plac'd, that is, where the *Scene*

does not easily, and without force seem to require it.

Ram. There can be no doubt of it; 'tis the blemish of the Stage; but for our excuse we may say, we were not the first inventors.

Sull. I know we had 'em from *Italy*; but that which pardons the *Italian* does not pardon us: They are all Idolaters of Musick, an effeminate Nation, not relishing the more masculine Pleasures; their *Theatres* are meer Musick meetings, and the little hodge-podge, which is their *Drama*, is little better than a continu'd Song, without action, incident or variety: But in *England*, where Poetry has been in perfection, where our Passions are more manly, I see no more reason for following 'em in this Custom than in their Dress, or romantick way of Intriguing.

Ramb. Yet you see these obtain very much.

Sull. 'Tis owing to the depravity of our Fancies: Our Judgments are not at all exercis'd in't; and while this ridiculous Humour lasts, I have no hopes of seeing our Poetry restor'd.

Cri. But this error of Musick is not Yesterdays invention; old *Ben* with all his exactness stumbles here sometimes:

It

It does not well become me to arraign so establish'd an Author, but I'm sure he has Faults of all kinds, and to the purpose in Hand I take the Song sung to *Celia* in the *Fox*, to be one; 'tis in the *Seventh Scene of the Third Act*: He brings her in by a Stratagem to *Volpone*, who is supposed to be Paralytick and quite disabled for Woman's Sport; but finding himself alone with *Celia*, he shakes off his Hypocrisie and his Furs, and runs in an extasie to her Arms: She is ready to dye with the surprize, fain would fly away, but he forces her to stay, and she, without saying one Word, is suppos'd to listen to an entertainment of Musick, tho' in all the Agony that the Poet cou'd give her. One would think she shou'd rend, and tear, and cry out for help, as she did afterwards with fury enough; but that would ha' spoil'd the Song: I beg *Ben's* pardon for this presumption, but this being to the purpose it came into my Mind.

Ramb. Your Example of *Ben* is enough to justify this practice in some Men's Opinion—— but, *Sullen*, you were saying that you had no hopes of seeing our Poetry restor'd at this rate, which implies that you think it a very low Ebb.

Sull. I think it never was worse: I know there have been Scribblers and Poetasters in all Ages; the Author you nam'd last complains of it in the beginning of the last Century; his CXII *Epigram* confesses it after a pleasant manner. *Virgil* and *Horace*, and *Ovid*, had their *Crispinus Fannius* their *Bavius* and *Mævius*: All Ages have produc'd these Virmin, but *Africa* never was more prolifick of new Monsters than this Town has been of late.

Ramb. But you'll grant the latter part of this Age has produc'd some extraordinary Men?

Crit. As it produces a Comet; once in twenty Years; and then its the discourse of all the World.

Sull. Nay, now you're too severe; what think you of *Etheridge*, *Dryden*, *Wicherly*, *Otway*, *Congreve* and *Vanbrug*?

Crit. And what think you of *D—s*, *D—y*, *G—n*, *S—e*, *B—y*, and who not? but above all, commend me to the ingenious Author of the *Trip to the Jubilee*.

Ramb. Oh Lord, Sir! you won't quarrel with that Play; never any thing did such wonders.

Crit. Oh 'twas admirable! admirable! I wonder the Town did not just then bespeak the Bays for him.

Sull.

Sall. Nay, for ought you and I know, he may live to enjoy 'em ; I assure you all the run of the Town is on his side. The *Owl* was never more esteem'd at *A-thens* than the *Trip to the Jubilee* was here.

Crit. Indeed I have known a Footman have a great stroak with his Lord at begging a Favour ; if all the Footmen in Town that admire him were to club for his Preferment, I don't know what might be done.

Ramb. The Footmen? Ay, and the middle Gallery too, I assure you are of his side, and that's a strong Party.

Crit. Why, I believe it, 'tis about the pitch of their Understanding ; but if ever it diverted one Man of tolerable Sense I'll be hang'd.

Sall. I don't know who are your People of tolerable Sense, Mr. *Critick*, but at that Play I have seen the Pit, Box and Stage so crowded— and if that is not a sign—.

Crit. 'Tis no more a Sign of their Approbation, than going to Church is a sign of their Devotion: There's (as *Dryden* calls it) a malicious sort of Pleasure in laughing at a ridiculous thing : I have crackt my sides at a *Bart'lemew Merry-Andrew*, tho' at that very Minute I knew

him the most despicable Rogue in Nature.

Ramb Well then, by your own confession he has gain'd one end of Comedy, he has made you laugh.

Crit. With scorn, contempt and derision; I wou'd ha'done the same at the merry Tricks of a Monkey, or the Wit of a Jack-pudding, and think it the more entertaining Farce of the two.

Ramb. Shall we enter into the Merits of the Play, and take it Scene by Scene?

Crit. You may do what you please, Gentlemen, but the Devil take me if I stay in your Company then! I wou'd as soon consent to be poyson'd as to hear that Play read; it wou'd be as offensive to my Nostrils as the turning up of a Dunghil.

Sull. Then let him pass; and to be serious, I think our time wou'd be spent ill enough of all Conscience; if you are for that sport, let's chuse a good Author, and pass away a Bottle or two in his Company.

Cri. Look ye Gentlemen, I have not long to stay; in the mean time if you require my Judgment in any particular, I shall be willing to give it you with as much Freedom as I can, without losing my

my respect to any honest Gentleman that deserves well.

R. Then you allow there are some that do.

Cri. I allow there are some that do better than others ; yet (with submission) the best of 'em are imperfect ; there are degrees among Poets, as there are among other Workmen ; some Painters can draw a Face tolerably well, but every Painter has not the Hand of *Kneller* ; and as *Kneller* himself excell'd only in the Face, so the best Poets are excellent but one way ; and you'll hardly name me one to disprove the Truth of what I say.

Sull. I think he that stands fairest fort is *Dryden* : *Otway* has done successfully in both kinds : *Congreve* has a great Character for Comedy, and in my poor Judgment has perform'd well in Tragedy : I speak now only of the most modern. *Fletcher* and *Beaumont*, are every where irregular, but always gentile and easy ; their Tragedies are moving, and their Comedies diverting : *Shakespear* sublime in the first, and always natural in the latter, *Johnson* humourous in one, and very correct in both : I descend to no others, only I can't omit *Shadwel*, whose Comedies are true Copies of Nature, but generally low and aukward ; his Tragedies are a mixture of Mirth and Melancholy,

Melancholy, and those of his own making good for little.

Cri. As for *Otway*, his Tragedies are singular in two respects ; his Fables are well chosen, and his Passions are very moving, but his Comedies are highly loose and prophane. *Congreve* has done successfully (I won't say always justly) in Comedy ; but I can by no means consent to the great Reputation his *Mourning Bride* has, because I can point to several Blots in't unmention'd by *Collyer*.

Sull. I can't tell whether it be civil to pry into the Merits of so establish'd an Author : Mr. C. is a Gentleman of Wit and good Sense, and above my Strength ; but you're at your liberty.

Cri. Well Gentlemen, as we find ourselves inclin'd, we'll fall upon the Examen of that and some other of his Works ; but at present let's dwell a little on Mr. *Dryden*.

Ramb. Why sure Sir there's not a word to be said against *Dryden* : I thought every thing he did was unexceptionable.

Cri. By no means : *D.* had his intervals as well as other Men, and we need not go far to find 'em ; but he himself has sav'd us some trouble ; for lest others shou'd find out his Faults, he often accuses himself by way of anticipation ;
'tis

'tis a famous one, that of the Famine in *Cleomenes*; of which, if another Poet had been guilty, we shou'd have heard on't in his next long Preface, with particular Marks of Disgrace. I may say of this Gentleman, as a certain Author said of him on another occasion; some of his Plays are like the Actresses on the Stage, they charm all the Town by Candle-light, but bring 'em to Day-light and they lose half their lustre: He, like his last Religion, was intrench'd behind a Mud-wall of Infallibility, and 'twas almost Prophaneness to Arraign him: His Comedies and Tragedies are of such a different Strain, you'd swear the Boys and Girls were not of one Man's begetting; or to say the truth, there was so little of the Father in 'em, no wonder they were so unlike.

Ramb. What d'ee mean by that?

Cri. I mean he had so much of his Plays from other Authors, that they can hardly be call'd his: He stole more than he made, and if every Bird wou'd take his own Feather from him, they'd leave him stript almost naked.

Ramb. I believe he has not borrow'd a Thought from any other Author, but he has mended it. I'll grant you he was a notorious Plagiary, and what's worse,

worse, he always contemns those from whom he takes: But you can't name me one of his Thefts, but I can shew you that very place worse in his Author than in him: His Translations are always better than the Originals; and above all, I prefer his Translation of the first Book of *Ovid's Metamorphosis*.

Crit. And in that very Book in many places he falls so short of *Ovid*, that one hardly knows 'em to be a kin; read the description of the *Giant's War*, and *Jupiter's* Speech to the God's, and compare the Translation with the Original; see if the *Struxerit insidias*, &c. be well English'd.

Sull. I know the place, and will not dispute it: *Ovid* is very Poetical in that description, *Dryden* is too concise; *Ovid* is lofty, *Dryden* low; the Majesty of the Thunderer is apparently worse in the *English* than in the *Latin*: But *D.* is not every where so flat; read him in the *formation of the Elements*: There the *English* is beyond all comparison more excellent, and in general bating here and there a Line, *D.* walks side by side with his Author, rather than follows him.

Crit. His Poems I take to be the best, either translated or his own: I prefer 'em to his *Dramatick* pieces as much as I prefer
his

his Tragedies to his Comedies : some of his Poems are indeed extraordinary ; his *Mac Flekno* is the Standard of Wit, as his *Abs. and Achit.* is the Standard of Metre and musical Numbers : His Tragedies have been the Entertainment of the Court and Town above twenty Years : He often hits the Sublime, which (as he says) is one of the two chief ends of Tragedy ; but I don't remember that he has toucht the pathetick above twice or thrice in all, and then not very naturally neither ; you have heard this often said by others I don't doubt, so I need not point you to the Places.

Sull. I know the places you mean ; and tho' the Compassion which he moves proceeds from the change of Will (which with *Aristotle* you condemn) yet I never saw those Plays but they had the effect he desir'd upon the Audience.

Crit. As for his Comedies — some of 'em are intirely Copies : There's hardly a Scene in his *Love in a Nunnery*, which he has not taken (at least the hints) from other Authors ; I'm no lover of Quotations, or else 'twere easie to shew you that all the Characters are old. His *Limberham*, as it was writ in a licentious Reign, so 'tis to that cause its success was owing. If that Comedy were now to be acted,
the

the Women wou'd sicken ; nay, the young Fellows wou'd hold their Noses at it. *Marriage Alamode* has a spritely Dialogue, but *Palamede* and *Rhodophil* are not Genuine, much less the serious part, which is a Copy of the two Lovers in *Grand Cyrus* : *Doralice* is writ with a brisk Court Air, but the Child was not his : His *Rival Ladies* is a confusion of Intrigue and Incidents, so generally obscure, that there's no possibility of keeping *the Ladies* company with our understanding : I like the Story better (I must needs say) in the *Novel* from whence he took it : *Secret Love or the maiden Queen*, is like an Army in the Field, and a Mountebank's Stage within the Camp ; War and Merriment blended together ; the Sword of *Death* and *Harlequin's* wooden Sword, the King and the Cocker, and as improbable as if a Tempest shou'd ruffle the Surface of the Sea, and leave it in a perfect Calm an Inch deeper.

Ramb. That exception may be made as well against all Tragi-Comedies as this.

Crit. The Exception is just let it fall where it will, and tho' the Authors of this kind of *Drama* pretend they do't for the ease of the Audience who love variety ; yet pleasing them can no more deter-

termine a Play to be good, than a long wasted Coat proves a Man a good Taylor, who makes it but to agree with the extravagance of the Mode.

Ramb. But look you, Sir— suppose your Taylor brings you home a Suit of Cloths, you are in a very quarrelsome Humour, swear the Skirts are too full, the Sleeves too long; the Taylor swears by his Thimble— Sir— this Suit is made by the nicety of Rule, it corresponds with the Fashion to a Button, and if any thing in the World can fit better to your Body, I'll swallow my Needle: The Coat is put on, and it becomes you as well as your own pretty Complexion: if you find it answers these ends, what have you farther to enquire?

Sull. Or here's a Fellow brings you home a flaming full bottom'd Wig, it curls down your Back like a Vine down the side of a House; you being a little Cinical, and something near a Citizen to any thing that's fashionable, cry, Sir, I tell you 'tis too big by half; I shall look like the King's Head peeping out of the Royal-Oak; I'll ha' none on't— the Fellow modestly tells you, he makes it directly to the Mode, and swears he has adjusted it to a Hair.

Crit.

Crit. These are trifles, Gentlemen, and only prove that a merry Tragedy (which indeed is a Solecism in Poetry as well as in Speech) may pass on the Stage, because our vicious Appetite is ever wavering ; it proves us ill Judges, but makes nothing for the purpose : But to return to Mr. *Dryden*— his *Sir Martin Marrall* is both Plot and Language, taken from two *French Poets*, and all the Incidents from others. His *Spanish Fryar* is not a greater Instance of his instability in Religion than 'tis of his Theft ; the *Comical part* being founded on the old *Novel* of the *Pilgrim*. His *Tempest* is intirely *Shakespears* and *Sir William Davenant's*, and his *Wild Gallant* not worth talking of.

Ramb. This is severe dealing Mr. *Critic* ; but what say you to his Tragedies ?

Crit. I allow'd at first that his Tragedies were better ; they shew his Genius more turn'd to Heroick ; but when I say better, I mean by the Language and Numbers ; for in these his Thefts are innumerable as in the other ; I'll not trouble my self to repeat 'em, they're well known to all who have read the *French* or *Roman Poets*, and let his works rest in Peace with his Ashes. *De Mortuis, &c.* you know, but I shall never trouble his Ghost

Ghost again; but this one thing I must say, that while he was living he wou'd hardly allow that any Poet did tolerably but himself; he had the Spirit of Envy hid within him, and it had been better with some young Writers if he had been in Peace some Years ago.

Ramb. How's that?

Crit. I'll stir his Ashes no more; but who knows not the story of *Lucretius* and *Horace*?

Sull. I can't directly charge that on *Dryden*, because as some say, that was a trick of his to suppress Mr. *Creech's* growing Reputation; so for ought I know, it may be their envy to suppress *Dryden's*; but this I know, that he has publicly Panegyrick'd one Author with the *Old Batchelor*, another with the *Relapse*, and Mr. *Southern* very frequently and on all occasions; and yet I have seen him bite his Nails for Vexation that they came so near him.

Crit. Two of those three you've nam'd have oblig'd us with better Comedies than any of his; and tho' Mr. *Congreve's* Reputation arises from his first, third and fourth Play, yet I must needs say, that according to my taste, his second is the best he ever writ.

Ramb. If you mean the *double Dealer*, you go against the Opinion of all the Town.

Crit. I can't help that; I'll follow my own Judgment as far as it will carry me, and if I differ from the Voice of the crowd, I shall value my self the more for my Sincerity: But you're mistaken, all the Town was not of that Opinion; some good Judges were of another; but without being byas'd or prejudic'd, I do take the *Double Dealer* to be among the most correct and regular Comedies: Mr C. intended it so, and it cost him unusual Labour to do't; but as he says, he has been at a needless Expence, and the Town is to be treated at a cheaper rate: But with all Mr. Congreve's Merit, I don't take his Characters to be always natural; even in the *Double Dealer* some are out of probability, one in his *Old Batchelor*, and several in *Love for Love* obsolete.

Sull. We shall be glad you'll convince us of that; for as yet I have not heard that objected.

Crit. Whenever you please Gentlemen.

Ramb. Why not now?

Crit.

Crit. My time's expir'd ; I have an Appointment at Four in a Ladies Chamber ; and I love to be punctual in such a Case.

Sull. Methinks you'll carry but little good Humour with you to the Lady ; this discourse has put you into a kind of ferment.

Crit. Then I'll go and work it off there ; at six I'll meet you at *Lincolns-Inn-fields* Play-House.

Sull. What Play is't ?

Ramb. *The way of the World*, with the new wonder *Madam D'Subligny*.

Crit. There's another Toy now—— Gad there's not a Year but some surprizing Monster lands : I wonder they don't first show her at *Fleet-bridge* with an old Drum and a crackt Trumpet—— walk in and take your Places—— just going to show—— by such a Stratagem, and a Monkey or two thrown into the bargain, Mr. B. might double his Stake, and come off pretty snug with his *French* Adventure.

Ramb. Let's meet there ; methinks I long to be ogling *Madam's* Feet.

Sull. No, I'm not for meeting there ; the *Generous Conqueror* is acted at t'other House, and lest it should never be acted again, let's go see it to Night.

Crit. With all my Heart : I know the Author, and because that Tragedy has made some noise, and has many particularities, if you please, we'll take it Scene by Scene.

Ramb. When shall we meet again ?

Crit. To Morrow at Two, and we'll Dine together.

Sull. At the *Blew Posts* then——.

Ramb. Agreed, agreed—— here Drawer—— take your Reckoning.

Exe.

SCENE. *The Blew-Posts.*

Critick.

Crit. **H**ERE Waiter, is the Company come?

Wait. Sir, they left Word they wou'd stay for you in the Tennis-Court.

Cri. Inquire how long it will be before Dinner.

Wait. The Cook tells me 'twill be half an Hour.

Crit. Go into the Gallery, and tell 'em I am here, and that I desire they'll pledge me half a Pint of Sherry to the Cook's Health.

Wait.

Wait. Sir, they are here.

Ramb. *Sullen*, I have won my Wager, did not I say *Critick* was a Man of his Word?

Crit. Oh! I keep my Word as punctually as e're a Citizen of 'em all; I never break my Promise——

Sull. But to your Creditors.

Ramb. Nay, if this promise had been made to a Creditor, I wou'd not have taken Ten to One for his appearance; but to an appointment of this kind, 'tis Ten to One he's as punctual as the Hour.

Crit. Notwithstanding your raillery, Mr. *Ramble*, this appointment was made to a Creditor, and the most importunate Dun I have.

Ramb. Thou meanst thy Stomach, or I'll be hang'd.

Crit. You are in the right on't; I'm as certainly hungry when the Clock strikes Two, as any *Cheap-side* Shopkeeper that wears out his Shoes and the Shop-boards with impatience to hear Twelve toll'd by *Bow-Bell*: I have touch'd neither Plate nor Glass since I saw you, therefore let me tell you I had much ado to prevail with my Stomach for Credit till I met you.

Ramb. Come, thou shalt now pay him the whole Debt; in the mean time we'll

bribe him with a Glass for forbearance.

Sull. I hate your Whets before Dinner, 'tis the pretence of a Sot, and is as unnecessary to a good Stomach, as now-a-Days a Gentleman Usher to hand a Lady to her Drawing-room; 'tis anticipating the Pleasure I may enjoy with my Mistress, by quenching my Appetite with a Woman of the Town.

Ramb. 'Tis rather like a Kiss from your Mistress, to prepare you for greater Pleasure: Shall we go up?

Crit. You come from the Court, who is playing?

Ramb. Two Gentlemen against two Markers, for five Pieces a Head.

Cri. Who backs the Markers?

Ramb. Lord Irish, and Col. Hasty, and the Gentlemen are like to win; shall we see the Set out?

Crit. 'Tis over; I hear the Rackets thrown down; the Gentlemen have beat 'em.

Sull. I am glad on't, and always will beat 'em in such Matches: I wou'd as soon make a Bett on *Fuller's* side against the Parliament, as back these Markers; the Rogues will either be brib'd to play a Crimp, or are so timorous they can't maintain their Play.

Crit.

Crit. What have you order'd?

Ramb. A Brace of Carp stew'd, a piece of Lamb, and a Sallet; d'ee like it?

Crit. I like any thing in the World that will indure Cutting: Prithee Mr. Cook make haste or expect I shall Storm thy Kitchen.

Sull. Why thou'rt as hungry as if thou hadst been keeping Garrison in *Mantua*: I don't know whether Flesh and Blood is safe in thy Company.

Cri. I wish with all my Heart thou wert there, that thou mightst understand what it is to fast as I have done: Come, to our Places... the blessed Hour is come... Sit, sit.... fall too, Graces are out of Fashion.

Ramb. I wish the Charming Madam *Subligny* were here.

Crit. Gad so don't I: I had rather her Feet were pegg'd down to the Stage; at present my Appetite stands another way: Waiter, some Wine.... or I shall choak.....

Sull. This Fellow eats like an Ostrich, the Bones of these great Fish are no more to him than the Bones of an Anchovy; they melt upon his Tongue like marrow Puddings.

Crit. Ay, you may talk, but I'm sure I find 'em not so gentle; here's one yet

in my Throat will be my death; the
Flask... the Flask....

Ramb. But Critick, how did you like
the Play last Night?

Cri. I'll tell you by and by, Lord
Sir, you won't give a Man time to break
his Fast: This Fish is such washy Meat...
a Man can't fix his Knife in't, it runs
away from him as if it were still alive,
and was afraid of the Hook: Put the
Lamb this way.

Sull. The Rogue quarrels with the Fish,
and yet cou'd eat up the whole Pond; the
late Whale at *Cuckold's-point*, with all
its odoriferous Garbadge, wou'd ha' been
but a Meal to him: Well, how do you
like the Lamb? does that feel your Knife?

Cri. A little more substantial, and not
much: Well, I shou'd certainly be starv'd
if I were to feed with the *French*, I hate
their thin Slops, their Pottages, Frigaces,
and Ragous, where a Man may bury
his Hand in the Sauce, and dine upon
Steam: No, no, commend me to *King
Jemmy's* English Surloin, in whose gen-
tle Flesh a Man may plunge a Case-
knife to the tip of the Handle, and then
draw out a Slice will surfeit half a Score
Yeomen of the Guard. Some Wine ye
Dog.... there... now I have slain the
Giant;

Giant; and now to your Question.....? what was it you askt me?

Ramb. Won't you stay the Desert? Some Tarts and Cheese?

Cri. I abominate Tarts and Cheese, they're like a faint After-kiss, when a Man is fated with better Sport; there's no more Nourishment in 'em, than in the paring of an Apple. Here Waiter, take away....

Ramb. Then remove every Thing but the Table-cloth. I askt you how you lik'd the Play last Night?

Cri. That Question is not so soon resolv'd as you imagine; if I must give you my Judgment, I must do it upon due Consideration; there goes more to the answering that Question, than barely Ay or No.

Ramb. But upon the whole, you may tell me whether you lik'd it or dislik'd it; that declaration will cost you but an Ay, or No.

Cri. Pray in the first place, what is your own Opinion of it?

Ramb. Why Faith I think it a very pretty Tragedy.

Cri. And what's your Opinion *Sullen*?

Sull. Perhaps I have not intirely so good an Opinion of it as *Ramble* has, because

because I regarded it with more Attention; but setting one thing against another, I must needs say, I don't think it an ill one.

Cri. Well, and for my part.... as I don't think it the very worst I have seen, so I must needs confess, I have seen many better; if you won't take it ill that I so far contradict your Opinions; I must likewise say, that for the Faults I shall discover 't'ye by and by, I have not seen many worse.

Ramb. Nay, Faith, as for our taking it ill, 'tis not a Farthing matter; but if the Author knew your Sentiments, I believe he would hardly thank you.

Crit. I wish the Author very well; and every Gentleman who writes for his own as well as the Town's Diversion; but I hope 'tis no injury to the Author to speak truth of him.

Sull. That is as it happens; some truths are not of a nature to be talk'd of; 'tis ill manners to tell a Lady such and such a thing is amiss in her Face, tho' perhaps, her Face and all about it is as frightful as *Medusa's*: Wou'd you tell a Courtier of great Figure, that his Ancestors were Inn-keepers, that as he now keeps six Footmen in Livery, so his Father kept twice so many.... Horses... at Livery?
wou'd

wou'd you tell a fine Gentleman, whom all the Town admires, that there's a Deformity in one of his Legs, his Hips, or his Eyes? those may be Truths every one of 'em, but 'twou'd be an ill Complement to let the World know it.

Crit. It wou'd still be Truth, tho' all the World dislike it: And when a Question is put to me, wherein I must either give offence by speaking Truth, or please by telling a Lie, Faith I'me such a Clown, that I had rather want Complaisance than dissemble with any body.

Ramb. Thou hast not had thy Education at Court I find; nor among the Quality, either Men or Women.

Sull. I'll be sworn for him in that particular; his Conversation has been more with the Dead than the Living; for the Vertue he talks of, is no where to be found but in History.

Crit. Well Gentlemen, setting this aside, what is't you require of me?

Ramb. Lord, you Criticks love to be intreated to give your Opinions, as Singers love to be askt to sing: I know thee so well, thou wou'dst not for a hundred Pound but say something of this Play.

Sull. A Play with Errors in it is the Inheritance of a Critick; he takes Livery
and

and Seisin, and rifles the unfortunate Author like a *Vice Admiral* of the Coast that falls foul on all Wrecks that float into his Dominion.

Crit. Good merry Gentlemen don't be so critical on the Critick; I desire the Character no more than you desire to be call'd Slovens: I own I love to find a Fault where it's very notorious, and love to shew it when I ha' done.

Ramb. That latter Clause is fair; and do you pretend to shew us Faults in this Tragedy?

Crit. I do; and you shall judge if what I object is not very reasonable; let's send for the Book, and read it over.

Ramb. Here Waiter--- send to the Booksellers in *Pell-mell* for the *Generous Conqueror*, and make haste--- you say you know the Author *Critick*.

Crit. By sight I do, but no further; he's a Gentleman of good Extraction, and for ought I know, of good Sense.

Ramb. Surely that's not to be question'd; I take it for granted, that a Man that can write a Play, must be a Man of good Sense.

Crit. That is not always a consequence; I have known many a singing Master have a worse Voice than a Parish Clerk, and I know two dancing Masters at this time,

time, that are directly Cripples: A Watch-maker may have an exquisite Hand in making and putting together the several Parts of a Watch, and yet know nothing of the Ascension and Declension of the Sun, which is the best part of his Trade: A Ship-builder may fit up a Man of VVar for the *West-Indies*, and perhaps not know his Compass: Or a great Traveller, with *Heylin*, that writ the Geography of the whole World, may, like him, not know the way from the next Village to his own House.

Ramb. Your Comparisons are remote Mr. Critick.

Crit. Not so remote as some successful Authors are from good sense: VVit and Sense are no more the same than VVit and Humour; nay there is even in VVit an uncertain Mode, a variable Fashion, that is as unstable as the Fashion of our Cloaths: This may be prov'd by their VWorks who writ a hundred Years ago, compar'd with some of the modern; Sir *Philip Sidney*, *Don, Overbury*, nay *Ben* himself took singular delight in playing with their VWords: Sir *Philip* is every where in his *Arcadia* jingling, which certainly by the example of so great a Man, proves that sort of VVit then in Fashion; now that kind
of

of Wit is call'd Punning and Quibbling, and is become too low for the Stage; nay even for ordinary Converse; so that when we find a Man who still loves that old fashion'd Custom, we make him remarkable, as who is more remarkable than *Capt. Swan*.

Ramb. Nay, your Quibble does well now a Days, your best Comedies tast of 'em; the *Old Batchelor* is rank.

Crit. But 'tis every Day decreasing, and Queen *Betty's* Ruff and Fardingale are not more exploded: But Sense Gentlemen, is and will be the same to the World's end.

Sall. And Nonsense is infinite, for *England* never had such a Stock and such Variety.

Ramb. Yet I have heard the Poets that flourish'd in the last Reign but two, complain of the same Calamity, and before that Reign, the thing was the same: All Ages have produc'd Murmurers; and in the best of times you shall hear the *Trades-man* cry--- Alas Neighbour! sad Times, very hard Times--- not a Penny of Money stirring--- Trade is quite dead, and nothing but War--- War and Taxes--- when to my knowledge, the gluttonous Rogue shall drink his two Bottles at Dinner, and his Wife have

have half a Score rich Suits, a purse of Gold for the Gallant, and fifty Pounds worth of Gold and Silver Lace on her under Petticoats.

Sull. Nay certainly, this that *Ramble* now speaks of is a great Truth; those hypocritical Rogues are always grumbling; and tho' our Nation never had such a Trade, or so much Money, yet 'tis all too little for their voracious Appetites: As I live—says he, I can't afford this Silk one Penny cheaper——d'ee mind the Rogues Equivocation? as I live——that is, he lives like a Gentleman—but let him live like a Tradesman and be hang'd; let him wear a Frock, and his Wife a blew Apron.

Ramb. See, the Book's here; go Waiter and shut the Door.

Crit. Give it me, let me point you to the places I mean. Come, we'll take it from the very first Line.

An Examen of The Generous Conqueror.

'Tis dedicated to my Lord Normanby; and the Author (that he may be before hand with his Patron) tells him that some Lines in't had the misfortune to be misinterpreted by the Audience;
he

he says they perverted the genuine meaning of his Words, and give his *Fable* a turn which he protests never was in his view; what d'ee think he means by this?

Sull. This I know of that Play, that a great number of strange Faces came to it the first Day, which I then took to be a sign that there was something particular in it.

Crit. 'Twas understood by the moderate part of the Audience to be highly Factious; some Sentences are unhappily writ that way, as I shall shew you towards the latter end; but how far the Author's Character contributed to this censure I can't tell, but in the *Dedication* he seems apprehensive that the Town knew him, and says he wou'd have conceal'd his Name if he had foreseen what happen'd. After this, according to the new way of dedication, he complements his Patron with saying he won't Complement him, but afterwards does it to the Life, by pretending he won't say a Word in his *Lordship's* behalf, and yet says all the World has prevented him in his Panegyrick.

Ramb. He gave my Lord but his due in that.

Crit.

Crit. I am not arraigning him for his good Opinion of that noble Person; but the matter I point to, is to show you, that he pretends to shun every thing that looks like Flattery, and yet in few Words says the grossest things he cou'd ha'thought of.

Sull. Has he not two Copies of Verses before his Play?

Cri. Yes, a sign his Cause wanted support. Those Persons seem to be Friends to him and to the Faction, but their flattery is fullsome and unjust. The first says— *If unity of Action, Time and Place*— and afterwards— *if numbers*— do so and so— then thou art the Man; which by the way, I wou'd have you take notice of, because it will appear in the reading, it has neither Unity nor Numbers.

The next Copy (which under the *rose* I take, by the *M.P.* to be *Mary Pix*) says what is yet stranger; I'll read the Verses,

*Thy first Essay has entertain'd us more
Than all the Muses finish'd Toils before.*

however it comes to pass, the Verses are smother than hers commonly are; her Muse was wont to hobble like a young

Negro Wench, that had just learnt to wear Shoes and Stockins; some of her Verses are worse than Prose, she knows not what Scanning means, nor did she ever use her Ear to judge of their awkward running: But what she affirms of this Play, is very hard upon all the rest; that this shou'd be the only good one that ever was, when I'll be hang'd if upon the comparison she'll allow her own darling bawdy *Ibrahim* to submit to it.

Sull. Mr. *Critick*, is this Mr. *Higgon's* first Essay in Poetry?

Crit. His first in the *Drama*, but not in *Poetry*: I have read a short Poem of his on a Lady that was detain'd in Town by a shower of Rain, where in a Tant he lays, he rejoyces at the cause that detains her, and if a Shower had such power over her, *he would drown the World to keep her here for ever*: That, I think, is extraordinary; if the World were drown'd, Lord ha' mercy on him and the Lady too: The Poem is in *Dryden's* first Volume of Miscellanies.

Ramb. He had just read *Ovid's Deucalion* and *Pyrrha*, and was in hopes they two might moralize that Fable over again.

Crit.

Crit. The Prologue, I see, is Mr. *Granvil's*, and is finely writ: But to enter on his Play—— And the very first Word in't offends me. *Compress thy Sighs*— if he had not a strong affection for unusual Word, he wou'd ha' said, *stifle* or *suppress thy Sighs*—— either of these had been more natural, and every whit as significant, but he writes it *Compress*, because 'tis pretty new and singuler.

Ramb. Come, come, Mr. *Critick*, you must not be too severe on Words; they're trifles, let's regard the Sense and Design and I am afraid you'll want pardon for what you shall say even on that Head; I know thee very well.

Crit. With your good leave, Sir, a Poet ought to be careful in his Words, as well as in his Thoughts: The Language of a Play, especially of Tragedy, is the first thing that offers it self to the Ears of the Audience; I own the Sense, Design, Turns and Surprizes, that is, what you call the *Oeconomy* of a Play, to be the more illustrious part; but all these without a flowing handsome Stile lose their Force, and rather shock than please; 'tis as if a House shou'd be built according to the nicest Rules of Art, and the Artificer shou'd leave the Front ragged and deform'd. But to proceed---

and here in the second Page we have a touch of his Numbers so celebrated by his Friend; pray count this Verse——
That interfere betwixt you and Happiness,
 if that be true *Profodia* I ha' done.

Ramb. That may be the *Printer's* fault and not his; perhaps he writ it *'twixt*, and then the Verse had been smooth.

Crit. To give him his due, I believe the Printer has wrong'd him in many places; but we may easily distinguish between him and the Printer: Here *Page* 4, he salutes the Courtiers with the gentlest how-d'ee certainly that ever was: I must repeat it, *Gonsalvo* says it, who, you must know is one of the brightest Characters he has, *Gonsf. Thou preacheest, Roderick, but I'm surpriz'd to hear a Courtier talk of Heaven, who all are Atheists by profession;* Did you ever hear the like? This is a hummer i'faith, and the Court is much oblig'd to him o'my word.

Sull. Oh fye! that was too gross in all conscience; the Boxes had certainly a very fine time on't, to hear themselves so lampoon'd; surely he has receiv'd some unpardonable Slight from the Court.

Crit. Nay, I can't tell that, but I dare swear he expected that piece of Wit
 wou'd

wou'd have been clap'd : 'tis evident he has a devilish mad Tooth for the Court ; how it comes to pass I know not, but I perceive it was not without good reason that his Play was censur'd. Well, *Alons*—— the Battle that was expected is now fought, and a Messenger from the victorious Camp arrives with the good News ; the Man's name is *Tancred*, he presents himself before the King, and delivers his Majesty a short account by word of Mouth, and then gives him *Rodmond's* Letter ; but pray, Gentlemen, mind the sublimity of the description ; 'tis as insipid as any you shall hear about two Combatants in the Ring in *Lincolns-Inn-fields*. King reads.

*This morning we attack'd the Enemy
In their Trenches, and after a dispute
Of four Hours, entirely routed 'em.
The particulars I leave to Tancred.*

There's the Poetical description of a Battle, there's a Tow'r of Thought and Phrase — Well, this lofty Letter swells the King ; he's big with rapture, and the swelling Mountain was to burst at last ; and now it rends with mighty noise, and out comes the little Birth.

K. *Here Tancred, wear this Jewel
 (for my sake,
 But first retire to ease thy weary Limbs,
 And then we'll hear the Tale.*

The King was in no haste it seems, he consider'd the poor Fellows fatigue more than the Glory of his own Arms; any time wou'd serve for that Story, that is, after *Tancred*, had been at the Barber's, got his Hands and Face clean'd, and his Joints rub'd with *Hungary Water*.

Ramb. Fie, fie, *Critick*, and yet I must laugh at thy damn'd Conceit, ha! ha! ha!

Crit. This being over, the *old Lombard* was inquisitive to know how his Son behav'd himself; Oh very well, quo *Tancred*, and the *Prince* and your Boy will be here to Night. Ay! says the King, we'll make a merry Night on't then, i'faith we will—— his Words are these——.

K. *The Wretch that mourns to Day
 (shall die;
 Tho' he this Minute lost his Mistress.*

Is not that Tragical, Gentlemen? excellent Poetry in the Mouth of a King:
 Losing

Losing a Mistress was a frivolous Thought.

Ramb. I don't perceive that so much amiss; 'tis low but 'tis natural.

Crit. 'Tis low, therefore 'tis unnatural in Tragedy; can any thing be so flat? can any thing in the World be so sickly as the Complexion of that Letter? Description ought to be the chief care of every Poet; it admits of many fine Images. *Shakespear* wou'd not ha' told his Story at that rate; his relation of Battles and Triumphs are his Master pieces, and 'tis the best occasion a Poet can have to display himself.

Sull. But suppose the Author knows this as well as you; and refuses the occasion you so commend, only using it to give the King a summary account of his Victory, because his Victory was to make him more acceptable at his return.

Crit. The Victory was to be his before the Battle was fought, that's certain; a Poet may give it to whom he will, but why cou'd not the relation of that Victory ha' been a little more elate, more Soldierly? it shou'd ha' been put into Metre at least, and shou'd ha' carried a Face of greatness, something of the Hero that sent it; that you must not

deny; but as it is, it is infinitely too low. Well, but pray mind the old Fellow's Answer to *Tancred*.

*Gonf. Oh how the noble Story warms my
(Blood !*

What Story does he mean? not a whisper pass'd between him and *Tancred*, and the Devil's in it if the noble Story Lies in the Letter—— the next Line is Nonsense; he speaks still of the Story——

*Contracts each Nerve my cruel Age ex-
(tended*

This is beyond all contradiction abominable Nonsense: I thought old People had their Nerves contracted and not extended; I always lookt upon Age as the cramp that stiffen'd their Limbs, not suppled 'em; their Sinews shrink, their Joints bend, they go double, and how comes all this? Why by Age; a Barber's Prentice that can't cure a broken Skin wou'd ha' said better.

Sull. The Author was certainly over-
seen there.

Crit. Well, in Page 10 we have the Nerve again, and as *Gonsalvo's* was just before

before extended, so now the King's is melting.

*Each melting Nerve is all on Flame
And every Fibre burns——*

like Thread, he shou'd have added.

Sull. What? now he's in love is he? this is said of his Mistress?

Crit. Yes, in the heat of his Glory and Victory. Well, I'll read on——

Sull. Hold, let me hear that again.

Crit. *Rod.* speaks it. *Rod.* *Drive on to Conquest thro' the dusty Field*; dusty and Field are as constantly tack'd together as hurl'd and World; they have sworn never to part.

Sull. That's what I wou'd ha'said; 'tis time to think of another Epithete now; *dusty* has been worn to the Bone.

Crit. Ay, and at the bottom of this Page he has another fling at the Ministers of State: Well, *Exit.* King and *Manent* the three Conspirators; where pray mind the Sublime Poetry; *Serpit bumi tutus* ifaith he's resolv'd to keep his Neck safe.

Alb. *There is yet one Resource.*

Sull.

Sull. What a Devil's that ?

Crit. Nay, I don't know, I suppose he means opportunity or advantage, or something of that kind ; 'tis a barbarous Word ; but let it go : Now for the Arch Rogue *Malespine*.

Mal. Oh ! *Speak my better Angel.*

A fine term for a Rascal : now for *Albazer*.

Alb. *The Spies, which I by your command employ, Inform me that there is a mighty love twixt Rodomond and Armida.*

There's a flight—— a mighty Love ! mighty fine indeed ! then comes the Arch Rogue again.

Mal. *Confirm it Heaven !*

There's Heaven brought in as an auxiliary Pimp to their Roguery

Mal. *Can this be true ?*

Alb. *As true as 'tis a mighty Secret.*

There's mighty Poetry again.

Sull. The Penning of the eight Lines in *Malespine's* Speech, Page 12, is so obscure

scure I can't reduce it to Grammar, nor to my Understanding.

Crit. No matter, it sounds never the worse in the Mouth of an Actor, and that's enough—— now for the second Act.

Act second.

And the first thing I recommend t'ee here, is the excellency of the Numbers; pray listen, if in the reading they don't pass for Prose, I don't know the Number of my Fingers, 'tis Page 15.

Arm. You know, my Lord, the Prince
(and I
Have underneath one Roof been bred,
That habit first contracted such a Friend,
As knit by just degrees to Love,
To Love, to such a noble, ardent, Pas-
(sion,
So deeply rooted and so firm,
It cannot now transplanted be nor touch'd
Without destroying of the Tree.

Ha! What think you Sullen? d'ye mind that Phrase, *such a Friend*—— if he had said *Friendship*, he had been pretty near the matter; and then follows—— *Which knit by just degrees to Love, and such a noble*

ble ardent Passion--- here's *Passion upon Love* in the same Line, which is *Stratum super stratum*, false Heraldry.

Sull. What need he say destroying of the Tree? I should think *destroying the Tree* had been *English* without the Interjection of.

Crit. Oh you must allow Expletives in *English* as well as in *Greek Poetry*; that is, you must allow some unnecessary Words to fill up a Verse, no matter whether Sense or no, nay indeed tho' it make the Line nonsense; but the whole Speech is naught, and the *Allegory* carry'd on by the next Speaker is little better. But come, now for a Song, nay, it's a heavenly Piece I assure you; 'tis suppos'd to be between a lewd young Whoremaster, and a Baggage troubled with the falling Sicknels.

Dam. Thro' folly you deny my suit,
In ignorance your vertue lies.
When the first Maid had pluck'd the Fruit,
She only tasted and grew wise.

Now for the Wench——

Fla. I yield my Swain, I yield at last,
Ah! do not now despise,
Since 'tis my destiny to taste,
Come teach to be wise.

There's

There's Divinity With a witness : Oh Mr. Collyer, Mr. Collyer ! what a relapse is here since thy Reformation ! here's Smut and Prophaneness in conjunction, like the lewd Planets *Venus* and *Mercury* ; the Devil's in the Circle if the Ladies stand this.

Ramb. Faith I have not said a word a great while ; but this Song puts me in mind of the Opinion of some lewd Fellows about this Town, who maintain in Argument, that the Apple that Mother *Eve* was Damn'd for, was no more nor less but committing obscenity with her own Husband *Adam* : I perceive the Author is of the same Opinion.

Sull. This upon the Stage is not only loose, but irreligious and scandalous to the highest Degree : And I am very glad to see these things give so just Offence now a Days. Our Audiences are really mended in their taste of Plays, and notwithstanding all the Raillery we have put upon Mr. Collyer, it must be confest, that he has done the Stage good Service in correcting some of their Errors.

Crit. I don't know much in Mr. Collyer's Book that's to be blam'd : I'm sure 'twas high time to preach up Reformation, when the Stage was sunk to such a pitch of Infamy ; 'twas a noble
and

and an ample Subject, and not ill managed; I don't know that he has left any thing unsaid, but if he has a Fault, 'tis in saying too much.

Ramb. Right, he says too much, because he says a great deal that was said before by such another Author; if you will look over *Pryn's Histrio Mastrix*, you'll find most of Mr. Collyer's Thoughts there; not indeed in so good a Dress, for *Pryn* writ like a Puritan, but Mr. Collyer, to give him his due, like a Gentleman, and a Man of Wit; but that which I commend in him, is his last Part, I mean his Phrase, for I can't allow that he has made any great discoveries; for what he takes out of *Pryn*, he takes from the common places of some of the splenetick Fathers, and yet his Quotations are not every where just.

Sull. We are not to discourse on Mr. Collyer's merits; let those Gentlemen that have been foil'd by him, undertake that Province; let us proceed——

Crit. I left off at the Song, oh here it is—— the Dialogue is carry'd on by five Women; and one wou'd think there shou'd be prattle enough, but the Conversation proves short, and signifies just nothing.

Ramb.

Ramb. What do you observe in that Scene ?

Crit. I observe what I meet with in every Leaf, that is, the effeminacy and weakness of the Stile ; I never read any thing so prostrate ; I dare be hang'd if Mrs. *Oldfield* and Mrs. *Rogers* cou'd not ha' told the Poets mind in better Language of their own.

Ramb. Come give us an Instance, or else you are not just.

Crit. Here then: *Armida* you must know, complains to *Cimene* that she has stoln her Sweetheart from her, she can't forbear telling her of it ; and now the Game begins——

Arm. He comes, 'tis true, but never to
(be mine,

You happy Princess have the greater share
In his good Fortune.——

Now t'other, very concisely,

Cim. I! *Armida*?

Was not that pithy?

Arm. Yes, you *Cimene*.

Short and sweet again.

Cim.

Cim. *What means my Friend?*

And so the Repartee runs on; till *Armida* tells her what fine Sport she is going to enjoy in *Rodmond's* Arms. She ends it thus---

Arm. *Oh happy Princess! glorious in
(my ruins.*

Then t'other answers---

Cim. *I glorious in thy ruins?*

and says not one word more; there's an Eccho for you; there's Variety, Thought, Turn, and Surprize. (p. 19, 20, 21.)

Arm. *Mine, mine, Cimene.*

'Gad I commend *Armida*, she wou'd give her no more words than she brought; but in a minute after poor *Arm.* tells her she's out of her Wits, and knows not what she says: Well, now the Fit of the Mother takes another of 'em, and the old Lady preaches up Resolution to her Daughter, and tells her,

Ire. *'Tis now no time for childish vain
(complaints,
Well*

well hit Mother, childish enough in all Conscience.

Propose some way to stop the present ill--

Then comes Madam *Cimene* with the resource again---

*Had we more time there might be some
(resource*

Ha, ha, ha---, *Risum teneatis*-- if I were to die I can't forbear laughing.

Ramb. It tickles my Imagination to think how fond he is of that barbarous Word; we have met with it twice already in this Play, and in all the Books that ever I read, I hardly ever met with it before: I believe it came over with the *white Elephant*, for certainly 'tis of very foreign Extraction.

Sull. Nay, *Critick*, 'tis an *English* word, you understand your own Language sure!

Crit. I know what it means as well as the Author, but it sounds confoundedly in Metre; it might ha' done pretty well in *Chaucer's* time, but it lies bury'd with our Ancestors in *Edward the sixth's* Reign. Well, let it go; I hope we shall hear no more on't; but if you're for another *English* Expletive, have at you---

H

Cim.

*Cim. Methinks its nobler for to meet
(our Fate.*

That word *for* is as heavy on the Verse,
as a swinging Fine on some poor Rogue
that can't pay his Prison Fees; 'tis as
troublesome as a Cloak in hot Weather.

Ramb. These are but Words all this
while, the Author thought it needless to
be curious about such trifles.

Crit. He who won't take a little care
of his Words, will never have the Audi-
ence pleas'd: I have known some Plays
that have been excellent in every thing
but the Language, and wanting that,
they miscarried; the Play you mention'd
yesterday, was an example, *The Triumphs
of Vertue.* But its very apparent Mr.
H. has committed many over-sights.

Ramb. Perhaps 'twas writ in haste.

Cri. I have been inform'd 'twas in the
House last Winter; he cou'd not be much
in haste, and keep it so long unacted;
he had time enough to look it over.

Sull. Pray read on.

Crit. You say, I only cavil at his
Words, you shall now have a Specimen
of his way of Arguing; pray attend---

Cim.

Cim. I love like thee, and yet conceal my

(flame,

Which burns the more, the more it is suppress;

But you perhaps may wonder at my prudence.

The third Line is flat, nor do I know what she drives at; I can't imagine why she shou'd either think her self prudent, or think the other wonders at her; I don't see that either of 'em are guilty of Prudence in any respect; there's nothing yet looks like it, they're a Brace of as silly Creatures as a body shall desire to meet with; but if it were so, what Act of Prudence does she mean? I swear I can't imagine what she refers to; if she means concealing her Flame, I don't see any great Prudence in that; 'tis no more than every Chamber-maid can do with a great Belly, and that I presume is harder to conceal. Now t'other answers;

Arm. The more of that, just so much less

(of Love.

What is this to the purpose of the Scene? the two Ladies were striving for *Rodmond*, the Scene is upheld by that; but now they make an excursion to another Subject, as remote from their business, as

if they told one another that their Heads
ak'd, or their Shooes pinch'd 'em.

Sull. I fancy you strain a Point in this
reflection.

Crit. Not at all ; the Speech and the
Answer are frivolous and impertinent :
Well, *Exit Arm.* it shou'd ha' been so,
but the Printer was a Blockhead ; and
now enter King.

K. Prepare Cimene to adorn this Night, &c.

now *Cimene*——

Cim. You injure Sir the glory of the Prince
To rate his mighty Services to Love. (p. 22.)

Sull. Read that again.

Cri. To rate his mighty Services to Love.

Sull. I don't understand it.

Crit. Nor I neither, but I presume he
means *by Love* ; that is, she did not
think that her Love cou'd ballance his
Services ; as rating one thing *by* another
is the way to know the value ; but 'twou'd
be ill exprest both ways. Well, by
and by this gentle Creature is upon the
High-ropes, and who but she—

Cim.

*Cim. Not that I wou'd so despicable seem,
But that a Monarch may be justly proud
To yield his Heart to Charms as weak as mine.*

There's a Wench for you, she brags of her Charms, and who but she--- But not to be too particular--- We will now let the Poet make an offer at Description: he does it on a just occasion, and why not at the recital of the Battle, as well as the Triumph: Its no answer that *Malepine* does it to give the King jealousy; the subject requir'd a pomp of Words, and any body else might ha' said 'em: But what does he mean by *fluttering Birds shaking their empty Pinions*? I must own that's past my Catechism.

Ramb. I suppose he means while unfledg'd Birds--

*Crit. Gons. Noble Examples noble Deeds
(exites,*

There's false Concord, and a Word ill spell'd into the bargain; not to write Grammatically is an unpardonable Sin: The King at *Rodmond's* Entrance, bursts out into a Rapture of Metaphors.

*K. Welcome as Life, as Victory and Fame,
As hope to Lovers———.* p. 25.

The Victory and Fame the Prince brought
along with him, therefore these Meta-
phors are naught. Again

*Ad. The generous Offspring from the
(generous Stock
Derive their Vertues, and confess the
(Sire.*

Without straining a point in favour of
the Author, this can't be allowed true
Grammar neither; for we always mean
such Words, at People, Town, Church,
Offspring, in the singular Number; but
the Author understands this, or else he
wou'd not have put a Latin Sentence in-
to his Title Page; and I believe, for once
that he sees one of these Words in the
plural Number, he reads it a hundred
times in the singular.

Sull. 'Tis generally used in the singu-
lar Number to the best of my remem-
brance.

Crit. We are now in the 27th Page,
and pray mind this Verse.

Rod.

Rod. *Her Sanction can only confirm the*
(Grant.

Where's either the Sense or the Measure of that Verse? Beside, *Sanction*, tho' it's a good Word, yet 'tis so uncommon, it shou'd never be us'd above once, and this is the third time we have met with it in this Play; it shews in the Author something very near affectation.

Ramb. He plays with it as Mr. D. does with his *tremendous*.

Crit. I have run thro' this Act; now lets enter on the Third.

A C T III.

Now the Plot begins to warm; the K. and his Mistress have an interview; he raves like a Mad-man to find her still inexorable, and tells her—— *her Breath conveys his Fate*—— How comes that conveying in? if her Breath had contain'd his Fate, or convey'd him to his Fate, it had been Sense; but this is not the worst, her Breath does more; it *makes his Blood in purple mazes dance*: Dancing in purple mazes is very Novel; 'tis like the *smiling of the Sea*, which the Lord Ro-

chester returns on one of the Poets ; but this was a smart old Fellow, his Blood was as hot as any young Rake's of 'em all ; for when he despairs of his Mistress, he flies into most monstrous rants ; *Oh ! I cou'd swallow Sea's ; pour down the Danube, pour the Volga down ;* first the Seas, and then as a dram for digestion, the *Danube and Volga ;* if he had been for a larger draft, the *Nile, the Niger, and River of the Amazons,* wou'd ha' quench'd his Thirst and his Fever ; to these the two Northern Rivers are but Brooks : Well, what the Poet pleases.

Ramb. You're merry, *Critick.*

Cri. In the next Line he says he'll be calm, and yet the rant continues —

K. ——— *Yes I'll fly*
Back to the frozen North from whence I
(came,
To the remotest World's extended Coast.

remotest, as if *Sweden and Norway* were not even in *Ptolemy's* time, known to be the same World with *Italy.*

The Bard who lull'd the damn'd

Right, Orpheus went down to Hell,

Who Panthers could reclaim---

Sic vult Panthera domari.

—————Or Beast more fell.

Nay, with your good leave, the Panther
is the fellest Beast in the Wilderness,
if you'll take either Pliny's or Gesner's
Opinion.

Her wilder Heart no Power of sound can
(tame,
While the Creation melted with my Flame.

So Boys——there's rapture——With a
vengeance; there's blind Oedipus putting
the Gods to Logger-heads, with a Sen-
tence of Bombast:

And Gods meet Gods, and juggle in the
(dark.

Or as Ben as whimsically on such ano-
ther Occasion.

While I can live, I will prevent Earth's
(fury,

ἔμὲ θανόντ' ἄϊα μυχῷ τοῦ νεκροῦ.

There's

1

2

↑

5

1

2

7

Ramb. If you deny this, you deny all manner of Transport; These have been the Images of Tears, and there's no writing Poetically without 'em.

Crit. Nay, if you say its Poetical it shall pass; 'twere pity to rob him of that, he has so little of it.

After the Shower comes the Thunder; she now begins to ramp it, and tells him he's a perjur'd Rogue, and all that: Now *Rod.* *Unjust Armida—* but 'tis the Trade of your deceiving Sex. There's a Complement for the Front Boxes, directly counter to the fine things in his Epilogue; and in the next Line calls her a *fairy Elf*: but she wheedles him back, and so *Exeunt* good Friends.

Sull. One thing you mist, *Critick*; *Rod.* says very meekly, *By Heav'n I only did dissemble*, which is certainly a blot upon the Hero: He ought not to dissemble; a Hero is arm'd at all points from Vice, and shou'd not betray any weakness.

Crit. That indeed escap'd me: Now 'tis *Scene the second* as he writes it, tho' according to *Terence* and *Ben*, it shou'd ha' been the Fifth; for every new comer makes a new Scene if his business be not the same with the preceding. *Enter the three Rogues*, and now expect Mischief: Poor *Rodomond's* death is conspir'd

spir'd, and the odium is to be thrown on the King, that *Malaspine* may become his Majesty: This is an unnatural and absurd contrivance, as 'twill appear in the remarks on the last Act: The King comes upon 'em, and very luckily for their purpose, swears *Rod.* shall die; hear his Words.

K. *He dies by Heav'n, he dies, un-*
(grateful Rodomond
Shall dye———.

And cou'd he Hydra like renew again each
(Day,
Each several Day a several Fate shou'd
(give.

I defie the best Logician in *Oxford* to make substantial Sense of the last Line: *a several Fate shou'd give-----* shou'd give what?

Sall. Take it thus.--- *each several Day shou'd give a several Fate*; he meant that shou'd be the Sense.

Crit. That the Day shou'd give it him is ridiculous; if he had said suffer, the Riddle had been out; but 'tis a wretched and unnecessary Transposition of Words, and very obscure. But to do the Gentleman Justice every way, the Dialogue between the *King and Mal.* is very good; but

but even here he runs into the same error with his Brethren, he introduces Musick in the midst of the hurry and hottest part of the whole Play. The Author makes it as pertinent as he can, by pretending it is to compose the King's vexations; and so the Musick shall divert us till the next Act begins.

A C T IV.

Ramb. Drink, *Critick*, this is dry work.

Cri. Ay, with all my Heart. Well, the fourth Act opens with the two Collateral Lovers *Adelan* and *Cimene*, but the Conversation is too low for such a Spirit as the Poet gives *Adelan*; he Courts his Mistress in so abrupt a manner, there's ne're a *Temple* or *Inns o' Court* Beau but wou'd put him out of Countenance.

This young Ruffian's next frolick is to perswade *Rod.* to mutiny, and dethrone the King; but such a hot headed Rake as he shou'd ha' kick'd and flounc'd about with a better Grace; he's for pulling the Canopy and Crown about the King's Ears, and for doing it when the King had but just given him thanks for his Service in the Battle.

Suff.

Sull. But you don't consider that tho' he wou'd ha' put *Rod.* on such a mad piece of Work, yet *he* was to have the benefit of it; *R.* was a but a Tool to his design.

Crit. *Adelan's* Character is *Mottley* thro' out; an inconstant whimsical Fellow, and very unfit for the suppos'd Princess; sometimes he talks in Pyramids, and lays about him like a *Quondam* Bully of *Alsatia*, sometimes as meek as a starv'd Beggar; évery where uncertain, and therefore far unworthy the Rank he bears.

Sull. The fault you first objected to him was his awkward Address; if it had been more elevated, he had made an excursion out of Nature.

Crit. The Spirit of Tragedy shou'd always soar; Nature is not to be directly copy'd as in Comedy: Every Person in't shou'd wear the Buskin, and talk above the common level; but enough of such a known Hypothesis—the young Gentleman carries his Mistress off in a good Humour, and all's well so far——But now *Roderick* enters to his Friend *Rodomond*, pray observe.

Rodo:

Rodo. *Mistaken notions of mistaken*
(good
Your captive Reason lead astray.

A strange sort of Antiptosis, that, a forc'd
 and harsh composition of Words.

The brave should scorn the snares
Of that deluding Sex——.

There's for the Front Boxes again.

Nor Sacrifice to such a Toy as Woman,

There 'tis again, and the Scene ends
 with the same Scandal.

Ramb. That has always been allow'd
 on the Stage.

Crit. What? Abuse allow'd?

Ramb. If you call it so; Women and
 Religion, have always been the Poets
 common place of Satyr.

Crit. The greater is the shame; Well,

As drops of Water cast on conquering
(Flame,
Which add new fury to their native
(rage.

Just as if he had said, *and add new fury*
 to

to their native fury; false Heraldry again: Beside, native is a damn'd Epithete to fire. *Enter King* and now the two Rivals front each other; the King talks pertly a while, but at length, without any manner of provocation his Majesty, *this rugged Goth*, falls a blubbering and crying, only because the stubborn *Lombard* would not give him his Plaything.

Sull. Is that true? does the *Goth* cry?

Cri. 'Tis here in black and white; but see the turn, his Majesty's wry Faces make the good natur'd youth relent, and now — now — *Armida's yours*, a sweet condition'd Fellow I warrant him. p. 50.

Sull. But 'tis on condition he would first kill him.

Crit. Talk--- talk--- the old beaten Road: but now beware a hurricane — the K. finds the spark dissembles, and woe be to him for his roguery. K. *Like Whirlwinds then, I blow thee from my Soul: Like Whirlwinds!* In my mind one would ha' been enough at one time, for I don't understand the Analogy between him and many Whirlwinds. A Whirlwind is the agitation of several opposite Winds, which blowing furiously against each other, make that convulsion, which we
fre-

frequently hear of from t'other side of the Line, and these altogether make a Whirlwind. If the King had confin'd himself to one, it had been pretty reasonable; so *Exit his Majesty* and God speed him.

The next Scene brings in all the Lovers disguis'd, but because they were too near home, they are found and parted; the Women to their Needles, and the Men to their Fetters: This Scene is inartificially wrought; the Poet had now a good occasion to incite the Audience to pity, but 'tis so quickly over, the Audience no sooner saw 'em but they vanish'd: Besides, he has not made the young Blusterer *Adelan* say one Word to his Keepers, nor to his Mistress, which was a worse confinement to a Man of his fire than that he was going to. p. 52.

Sull. That was to draw all the pity on his two principal Lovers.

Crit. Oh he shou'd by all means ha' giv'n us a little more of their Company, then perhaps in good nature we might ha' giv'n 'em a Tear and a good wish at parting.

Sull. Proceed without Raillery.

Crit. Well, the next Scene he calls the second again, when in my Conscience it shou'd ha'been the Eighth; but where

the Scene now lies, you must find it out if you can: We don't hear of it's being chang'd since we entred into the long Garden; however enter two of the three Rogues.

Meroan. *The King this Minute has
(pronounc'd his doom,
To lose his Head to morrow in the Forum.*

Ramb. What Objection have you to that?

Crit. I shou'd be glad to know if Mr. H. reads of any *forum* in the History of the *Gothick* Invasion: I will not be positive in any matter of obscurity; but I do not remember that Appellation given to any part of the Towns under their Sovereignty; I am sure at this Day they're called Piazzas, Plasas, or Plasuelas, and that they have been so call'd above a thousand Years, and I believe were so call'd at that time; but this I submit.

Ramb. Let the Histories decide it.

Crit. I pass now to the last Scene of this Act, which is like to prove a terrible one; it consists of the *King* and *Arm.* the King still perseveres and sues, and she still refuses: at length he grows outrageous, and sends the Signet for *Rodomond's* execution; this

no ii bar flum [115] won 20 2 011
this frightens the Lady, but she recovers
her Tongue, and then lays about her with
a Vengeance: I must repeat these Lines.

Arm. *Hold, hold, inhumane Tyrant*
(hold,
Can't thou consent to take that precious
(Life,
Whose loss will leave no vertue among
(Men?

There's rage to the Life, no matter for
the confounded affront to the King, tho'
she tells him to his Teeth *Rod.* is a Hero,
and his Majesty but a Scoundrel: I pass
by that ill chosen Word *Consent*, it shoud
ha' been *resolve*, for consent implies a-
greement and participation, and the
King stood in need of none.

K. *'Tis fixt as Fate, and never can*
(be chang'd,
You may these Words remember.

Now the turn.

Arm. *I yield, I yield, here take the*
(curst Armida
To save my Rodomond, I will live ano-
(thers,
Be doom'd to Life more terrible than death.

Excess of good Manners to a King! but
the surprize is worth observing.

K. Armida yields, Gonsalvo, Male-
(spine, Albazer,
Partake the Joy, I want the strength to bear:
To either Pole let Seas and Winds convey
The wellcome sound, and all Mankind be
(happy.
A thousand manumitted Slaves shall owe
Their Freedom to this Day---

Sull. Hold, stop there, was it the Cu-
stom among the *Goths* to manumit their
Slaves?

Crit. Among the *Romans* it was, but
never never among the *Goths*: But you
interrupt me---

----- Shall ever bless
The happy Hour Armida saw the light.
Thou shining Excellence, thou best of Wo-
(men, and so on---

Now for God's sake tell me Gentlemen,
if all this violence of Joy has any man-
ner of cause; how a dickins cou'd the
old Gentleman give her so many pretty
Names for those confounded ones she
gave him? Is there any reason for this
Rapture? The rendition she makes of her
self

self to him, is the very condition of *Rodomond's* Life, who was to be still her private Minion ; *thou best of Women ! thou shining Excellence !* 'gad she's the worst of Hypocrites, and a most shining Scold.

Ramb. So *Critick*, this is latitude indeed.

Crit. She wou'd ha' been a fine Bargain o' my word ; what cou'd she be worth to the King, when her Heart was still his Rival's : I think 'tis the most unreasonable Extasy that ever was.

Sull. The natural Resentment of her words shou'd ha' been quite contrary : What Pleasure cou'd she bring him when she came with such a Curse in her Mouth ? 'tis unnatural.

Ramb. Nay Gentlemen, I agree to your Opinions : I think the King's Joy forc'd and constrain'd : The Author had a mind to make a Figure, but with submission to him, there's no occasion for't in this Scene : The King ought to have resented her scurvy *Billinggate*, and rail'd as well as she, and when he had done, ha' taken her for better for worse, according to the Letter, and made the best of a bad Market.

Sull. One thing (to do the Poet Justice) might be said in his behalf : The King's Character is, (p. 4.)

*Now wise as Man, and then as weak as
(Woman,
Capricious, humorous as the Wind,
As mild and humble as a Child corrected.*

Crit. If so, then he has made his Majesty a Changling : But Kings in Tragedy are not to be painted at that frolicksome rate : * *Mr. Rymer* has noted it very justly, that in Tragedy all Kings are presumptive Heroes, and there ought to be nothing in their Character but Majesty, Terror, Courage, and Resolution : But we'll shake Hands with this *Act*, and now for a finishing Stroke.-- Pray let me prevail with your Patience till this, the most important be over.

A C T V.

And the first thing that offends me here, is the *Prosopopeia* that *Armida* makes to the Stars,

Arm. *Ter radiant galaxies of blended Stars.*

As

As for the *Galaxies*. I know but of one in all the Firmament; all the Stars, if they were *blended* together, as she calls it, cou'd not make such another Figure: 'Tis true, there is a pretty considerable Number of Stars in all, and as she says, 'tis very hard, there was not one for her; but if she had not affronted *the milky way* at that rate, by prostituting that fine Name to so many Farthing Candles, who knows but she might have been oblig'd from thence: Alas! there are a great many lewd Stars in one part or other; there's *Jupiter*, as fit for her turn as her own *Rodomond*; *Theseus* would ha' done pretty well, but if she had been for two at a time, there are *Castor* and *Pollux*, and for a Pimp, who is a better than *Mercury*? So much for her Stars, and as for her *blended*, 'tis a word only fit for a Baker.

Ramb. You're a very pleasant Fellow Sir! and have a particular way of obliging--- Pox take thee---

Crit. Again,

Arm. *There is no cure for this immortal*
(grief.

If it was never to have an end, no cure for't, thats certain: Again---

I'll be his Bride, but never be his Wife.

Now I'm such a Fool, I thought when two Folks had been Marry'd, they had been *Man and Wife* without any more ado.

Ramb. Not without any more ado *Critick*; the Ring makes the *Bride*, but Consummation makes the *Wife*.

Cri. A very nice and modern distinction; but I'll be hang'd if either the *Goths*, *Vandals*, or more polite *Lombards*, ever thought there was any difference: But this is a Plot of the roguish Lawyers, to perplex honest Mens Purses and Consciences, with their distinctions of *ante & post coitum*, *ante & post matrimonium consummatum*, & *Nuptias adhuc imperfectas*, and a thousand such villanous Inventions.

Sull. This casuistical Law is the greatest Cheat in the Nation, the *Chancery* or *common Law* is nothing to't; twelve Proctors there are worse than twelve *Middlesex* Jury-men in a Verdict of wilful Murder, when perhaps the Man that's said to be kill'd, dy'd of a Fever.

Cri. Well, the Lady is resolv'd to die; the Poyson and Dagger, as *Dryden* says, are always ready, and helps out many a tragical Event; and a Cup of Poyson

Poyson is to dispatch her: But I don't see any reason why these two Lovers did not Marry before; 'twas an old Intrigue; and especially knowing the King had a mind to her.

Sull. The Author throws in the Quarrel for an excuse, that hinder'd 'em the first time they met, and the second time they meet to be Marry'd,

Cri. By chance, is not that strange? He did not seek her, he happen'd to meet her in other Company, and then talks of it; it had been more like being in earnest, if he had waited on her, and done his *devoir* like a Cavalier. Well, the suppos'd Poyson goes down, and now *Armida* is going to the Stars to complain of their cruelty. *Enter King* still in a Rapture.

K. Keep down my Joys, compress——

There's your *Compress* again: He now calls for her Hand to the Altar--- but pray listen to the fine Disposition she was in to Marry; what Manners here are to her King.

Arm.

Arm. Some leprous Scurf this wretched
(Hand defile,
And make it loathsome to thy touch and
(sight.

If this Lady be not a Vixen, there is no such Place as *Billinggate*; but not to droll--- I must needs say the Author ought not to have given his Heroine such Language against her Sovereign.

Ramb. 'Tis very common.

Crit. Not very common, but I confess I have seen it too often in other Plays; 'tis the very Scab of our *English* Poetry: The *French, Spanish, or Italian*, never offend in this kind; they never break in upon the Majesty of a King; they make the Character sacred, and if he happens to be a Tyrant, they leave it to Heaven to punish him; but by no means assault him with reproachful Language.

Ramb. Their Plays have no Life nor Spirit in 'em; they keep us calm with their great humanity; as we say, the civillest Man is commonly the dullest Man in the Company.

Crit. They have not our Rants and wild Excursions; but they have Elegancy, Smoothness, and an easiness of Expression,

pression, which delights the Ear and the Reason beyond our strain'd Bombast : But not to digress----. The grand Turn is now at hand. Enter *Gonsalvo* and *his Wife*, who had the Plot in her Apron all this while.

Gons. Hold Royal Almerick, bold, you
(*press your Fate,*

I wonder it was not *compress* ; but you *press* your Fate is strangely out o' the way too ; I suppose he means, you urge or hasten your Fate ; but as for *pressing* his Fate, that he cou'd not do till he had got her a' Bed : Now all's out, *Irene* tells the Story, and *Armida* is found to be the King's Daughter.

Sall. That I knew as well as she, as soon as I read the first Speech : The Plot is as transparent as a Venice-glass.

Ram. I assure you I think it a very fine Catastrophe.

Cri. 'Tis old, and worn Thread-bare ; but I will never believe there was such a thing in reality ; tho' many Authors mention 'em, and many Plays are founded on such Fables.

Sall. But why did *Irene* conceal this so long ? 'twas a secret of vast Importance.

Crit.

Crit. The Poet thought that an obvious Question, and prevents it himself; he makes the Woman say it was her fear of offending the King.

Sall. 'Tis a childish and ridiculous Reason: So that if the King's Passion had not brought things to that extremity, he must never have had his own Daughter: Absurd! must the King lose his own Child, and be chous'd with a Sham, only for a Woman's Caprice? this were a Trick to perplex all Laws, Titles, and Successions. The Thing it self is altogether improbable, and the reason for the concealment still worse.

Ramb. She had like to ha' prov'd a *Fairy-Elf* in good earnest, as *Rod.* once call'd her in jest.

Crit. I can't imagine what Moral the Poet can draw from such a Plot: This is the principal Business of the Play, and therefore shou'd give the Moral; tho' he makes the other do it, which ought not to be: The only Moral that can arise from this Story is, to advise us how we trust our Children with Nurses; a very edifying Doctrine!

Sall. 'Tis certain that this Part shou'd conclude the Moral; the other is not only inferior, but impertinent, and has nothing to do with it; 'tis an Under-plot,

plot, and consequently cou'd not properly give the Moral.

Crit. Well, here's another surprize; Now *Malespine's* Plot breaks out: The King orders him to go and release *Rodmond*, but with very insolent Language he refuses to obey the King, and not only disobeys him, but makes the King himself Prisoner: Some Lines of *Malespine's* Speech in this Scene are part of that which gave the Town offence; but there are worse to come. After this Revolution, *Mal.* stops the two Ladies, and even in the *Crisis* of his and the Kingdom's Fate, he prattles away the best of his time in Love to the King's Daughter, tho' her Father's but just imprison'd by him.

Ramb. Nay, the Poet might make him as great a Rogue as he wou'd.

C. Right, but he ought not to make him a Fool; such important things depend on his Conduct, that one moment slip, the whole miscarries: And this crotchet of his making Love at such a critical Juncture, is highly unseasonable, and a strain of the Poet's, beyond credibility.

Sull. the four last Lines of this Scene are notoriously Factious, and the *Master of the Revells* deserves I know what for passing them.

Ramb.

Ramb. That might not be Mr. *Killgrew's* Fault ; ten to one he expung'd 'em, but the Author was so fond of 'em he wou'd have 'em spoke and printed.

Crit. We will pass on to consider the probability of *Malespine's* Plot ; it seems so odd a villany that I can't let my Judgment consent to the success the Poet gives it : Its very strange that a King of so warlike a temper, and a General of the first account in the Play, shou'd be surpriz'd, disarm'd, and convey'd to Prison, and no body knew it in the City ; nay, not in the Court ; not so much as a mutiny, not a murmur : The Courts of Princes are fill'd with greater Villains than *Newgate* or the *Fleet*, if they wou'd all be corrupted ; certainly the most raging Tyrant in the World has some Creatures that won't betray him ; and 'tis stranger, that a King of *Almerick's* gentle disposition had not a Friend that wou'd stand by him : 'Tis too egregious ; for never was any defection so general, but some prov'd faithful to their Master, but to go on—— to another turn—— *Albazer* who (you remember was discontent) comes again with a back stroke and spoils all, and then we hear of an Insurrection : After this, here's fourth turn ; *Malespine's* other confederate revolts, surprises *Malespine's*

Ispine's Sword, takes it from him, and keeps him down; then comes a fifth turn—*Armida* proves not to be poyson'd, and so with a Couplet of politick Verses, drawn from the wrong Story of the Play, the Scene ends.

Ram. These fine turns in this Act got the Play great reputation; and I think (to do the Poet Justice) he has done it very artificially.

Crit. Some scruples remain against every one of 'em; I can't believe there is a possibility of carrying on and executing such a treasonable design without some noise: If he had interpos'd a little Tumult, and then suppress it, he had prevented the Objection; nor is the Author's precaution sufficient to obviate the improbability of it by saying, he had corrupted the Guards and all the Posts of Advantage; 'tis directly against the evidence of Reason and History.

Sall. But there is that in the Catastrophe which looks askint on the present Government; I can't be perswaded the Author cou'd pursue such a Story without having in his eye the Affairs of his own Country; and if a Poet will give his Play such turns as must of necessity offer against the establish'd Settlement of the

the Stage, I see no reason but he shou'd be dealt withal as a Libeller.

Crit. The Fable of the Drama is of that nature that makes it impossible for him to keep clear of it; therefore it was unfit for an *English* Stage: The affinity of some of his Characters with some Persons now in being, renders the design turbulent and seditious; and some Lines in *Maleppine's* part ought to be burnt by the common Hangman.

Ramb. Those Lines arise naturally from the Character, and seem to come in without any constraint.

Crit. Yet they are improper at this Juncture; he says in his Epistle, that if he had lived a thousand Years ago, he wou'd ha'made the same reflections; and so he might so long ago, and no-body wou'd ha'called him in question; but to write such a Satyr on the Court and Ministry at a time when so many discontented People gape for fresh occasion of Scandal, it is by no means fit for such a publick representation.

Sull. The Author cou'd not write any thing of this kind without being sensible of that application which wou'd be made of it; and it does not appear done by Chance but Choice.

Crit.

Crit. I know a Gentleman now in this Town who has had the good Fortune to please a thousand Audiences with his Plays; he is still a good Judge of what is fit for the Stage, tho' he has done writing; this Gentleman had the Story of *Edward the Second* recommended to him for a Subject. The Chronicle of that Reign is the most moving of any in the whole History of our Kings, and might be finely hightned by a good Poet; but after he had read the Story, he saw it very improper for these Times, and said it was impossible to touch such a Subject without some allusions that wou'd render him Guilty, and so he threw it by.

Sull. There was a Tragedy on that Story written by *Marlow*; it might do well then; but (as he said) 'twas not proper at this time.

Ramb. Well, Gentlemen, pray what think you of the *Generous Conqueror* altogether?

Sull. I'll tell you what I think of it; and I'll give my Opinion very impartially: The Unities of *Action* and *Time* are better observ'd in it than in many of our late Tragedies, and with a little allowance the same may be said of the unity of Place: I own the Action is not one and the same thro'out the Play, but if the under-action

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that

(that of *Malespine's*) have any connexion with the principal; if one Scene brings in another, that a third, and so on, and every Scene be wrought up conclusive of one great action at last; the unity may be said to be well enough preserv'd; and there is nothing very material to be objected against it in this: 'Tis true *Malespine's* design is of a particular nature from the rest, but not quite independent of it; it's made subservient to the great end of the Play, and that's enough to render the Action entire.

Crit. But you run away with a mistake; *Malespine's* design to make himself King has no relation to the chief Design; the chief Design is to bring the King out of that violent fit of loving *Armida*, and to buckle the four Lovers together, and all this is done by *Irene's* Plot: *Malespine* contributes not one tittle to it, he acts for himself; he endeavours to usurp the Crown, but is prevented; his Roguery is discover'd, he is surpriz'd, betray'd, secur'd, and sent out to Tortures, and we hear no more of him; so that this is quite independent of the other, not in the least subservient to it; the two Actions are carried on without any adherence to each other, and as they are divided all along in the

the Play, so the Catastrophe of each is different and remote.

Ramb. Enough of that; what else have you to say?

Crit. I wou'd say something of the unity of *Place*: I confess it is not very generous to rack any Gentleman's Play at this rate, but I can't forbear saying what just occurs to my Observation, because one of the Author's Friends brags so much of these unities in the first Poem before the Play.

Sull. Matter of Custom only; not worth regarding.

Crit. Nay 'tis pretty Singular and Positive: His Verses are.

*If Unity of Action, Time and Place,
 Observ'd with Care, give harmony and
 (Grace :
 If Numbers, if Ideas just and bright, &c.
 Be thou secure ———.*

This Copy of Verses puts me in remembrance of the Broom on *Van Trumps* Top-mast-head that was to sweep the Seas: But with his favour, let's run over the Play, and see if it deserves that Character: I now am following him to see if he keeps up the unity of *Place* so well as his Friend says.

In severity and strictness the whole Representation of a Play shou'd be confin'd to one Room, and no more; but that being too great a Nicety, and the Invention often cramp'd by it; the Indulgence of Custom has allow'd the Poets an Apartment, a Gallery, a House; but a Street has always been reckon'd too much; for after such a latitude the Unity is intirely lost; and the Play may as well take in the compass of half the Globe.

Sull. Yet nothing is more frequent.

Crit. I dispute not the practice, but the unreasonableness of it: I know the Poets have been Licentious to excess, and Custom has wink'd at it so long, that now it is become no Crime: But to the Play——

The first Scene is suppos'd to be a Garden belonging to the King's Palace; there the several Interviews and all the Discourses were had during the first, and part of the second Act, till *Armida* goes to make a visit to *Cimene*; when the Visit is making, which to be sure was not in the Garden, we must suppose the Scene to be remov'd to *Cimene's* Apartment; so there's one good Stride already, tho' we allow *Cimene* to lodge in the Court.

Ramb.

Ramb. That's but from the Garden to the Palace.

Cri. The Scene being here, the King comes in to persuade *Cimene*, his suppos'd Daughter, to prepare to Marry the Prince, who was then returning from the Camp; she, after a short Conversation, forgets she is in her own Apartment, turns her Back on the King, and *Exit.* Well, that's not all; the King, still in the Princess's Apartment, has News of *Rodomond's* approach; he forgets how rude it was to receive such a Train of travelling Soldiers in a Lady's Chamber, but instead of going to his own, he stays there, and receives the Conqueror and all his Crowd.

Ramb. A Trifle.

Crit. Let me go on; the Gallantry between the King and the Prince being over; and by the by, not a word all this while of the Battle; the King calls out to *Gonsalvo*--

K. Lead on *Gonsalvo* to *Armida's*----

So they remove to *Armida's*; but where that is, you must find out if you can: However, we will be so courteous to suppose she lodged in the Palace, where the Scene continues to Page 39, then it

removes again to the Garden. *Scene in Capital Letters, a long Garden.* The changing of the Scene is contriv'd to let in the three Villains to confer about the Death of *Rodomond*; they all meet in the Garden, and determine that matter: Then comes the King there to an Entertainment of Trumpet-musick; and after him *Adelan* and *Cimene*, and three more, disguis'd, the two first in order to be marry'd; and all this variety of Designs transacted on one and the same Spot, which cannot be render'd probable without a very Catholick Faith.

After this the King is to be marry'd, and then the Scene must be remov'd back to the Palace; he wou'd not be marry'd in the Garden to be sure, it must be within Doors, and if there was not a Chappel within the Court, then the Scene might be to seek; but matters were not so ripe for the King's desires, there's no need of looking out for a Temple, and a heathenish Priest; for instead of being marry'd, the King is Imprison'd, and where the Prison was, is not so easily known: If it was in any part of the City, how cou'd they convey the King there without an Insurrection? if not within the City, where was it? The Palaces of Kings are not Prisons; there's not
one

one of the Royal Palaces in *England* has a Dungeon in't, what they have in that Country I can't tell; but be where it will, it makes the Scene shift too often, and take up too great a compass; I say, in strictness it does so.

Ramb. And all that you have observ'd is, that the whole Representation takes up but the Palace, and the Parts about it: I think that's unreasonable.

Crit. Very far from being regular o' my word, tho' if the Author's Friend had said nothing of it, it shou'd have past: I have little to say to the Unity of Time; for with a favourable Interpretation, a courteous Reader may suppose it all transacted in reasonable good time; the only doubt is, the distance of *Ravenna* from that part of the *Po* where the Battle was fought; that City being from the nearest Bank of the *Po*, about 20 Leagues; but I shall not trouble my self to examine into a matter of such uncertainty, which, if it be out of compass of Time, is yet the greatest Error he has made of that kind, and for that reason may be excus'd.

Ramb. Upon the whole, *Sullen*, pray what's your Opinion of it?

Sull. I gave you part of my Judgment upon't before, I shall add the rest now:

The Prince has too much Softness in his Character; he quite forgets that *Almerick* was the Murderer of his Father, and an Usurper still in his wrong; he furnishes him with no manner of Resentment for so execrable a Fact, and such continu'd Injustice; there's not one Line to let the Audience and the Reader know that he so much as remembers his and his Father's Wrongs, that he so much as ever knew that *Almerick* obtain'd the Crown by Blood and Usurpation, and that he still kept it in the highest Prejudice of his own Right. Another thing is, the King seems to be guilty of such another piece of Weakness, in trusting the Army to a Prince so belov'd of the Soldiers, and one, whom, he knew in his Conscience he had so notoriously wrong'd; 'twas a Confidence of a dangerous nature in the Hands of one who had so much reason to revenge his Father's Death; but not to be prolix. My third Objection is the King's Passion at that unseasonable Juncture: He whines and blubbers for a Mistress, just in the heat and hurry of his Affairs; the relation of the Battle is deferr'd that he may carry on his Intrigue; and all the important Dependances of the State stand still for this: 'Tis beyond the credibility of

of Sense or Reason ; 'tis directly contrary to the Description of that Warlike Savage People, to languish with so idle a Passion ; but as he manages it, 'tis so repugnant to the Majesty of a King, to the Interests of his Government, and to probability, that no allowance can make it tolerable.

A fourth Scruple remains with me, and that is, the sudden surprize the King's in when *Gonsalvo* puts him in mind of *Clarismunda* his late Wife ; he just then sees in *Armida* the perfect resemblance of her, and now no longer doubts but she is her Daughter : This is a wretched reserve to help out *Irene's* Discovery : Cou'd the King that saw her every Day, not see this before ? Lovers are curious, and have Eyes that pierce into every Feature of their Mistresses ; no Line escapes their Observation and Flattery ; and cou'd not he find out this Similitude before ? he neither cou'd forget his Wife's Image, nor love his Daughter so long without viewing in her Beauty the same likeness which he afterwards discovers.

My last Objection is, that the Discovery which *Albazer* makes, does not seem to have sufficient provocation from what he pretends : He begs *Euphelia* of his

his Patron, as the Reward of his Services; his Patron pretends to be engaged to another, which refusal makes *Albazer* fly out into Discontent. I see no reason that he shou'd ask his Patron for what was as much in his own power as in his; why did he not try to win her by Address? or if she were Coy, why might not he resolve to secure her in that expected Confusion which was to come? Must this Toy make a Breach between three such confederated Villains? Villains that were to sacrifice their Lives for the hazard of an uncertain Treachery? She never was in *Malespine's* power; she might more probably have been in *Albazer's*, because *Mal.* had other Business to mind than captivating of Women; and *Albazer* almost idle, having the Citadel in his Hands, might without asking any body's consent have carry'd her there, for his Lust or what other End he pleased.

These, which I have mention'd are Escapes, without which no Poet can write any thing of this kind; but taking it altogether, the Play is more Uniform than some of our late Tragedies; but for the Versification I have nothing to say.

Crit.

Crit. I shall never consent to allow the Language so much as tolerable; 'tis too low and familiar, too near the level of Conversation, and what's yet worse, almost every where *Prose*. I wonder the Author shou'd let his first Play, on which he was to build his future Reputation, escape him with so little Art: His Thoughts are sometimes good, and in some places well exprest, so that it does not appear an incapacity of doing better, but Negligence or too great an Affectation of following Nature. I might add, that the *Lombards* did not conquer *Italy* till long after the time of the *Goths*, which brings into suspicion the very Foundation of the Play; for then *Almerick* cou'd not usurp the Throne in wrong of any *Lombard*, for before the Innundation of the *Lombards*, the *Goths* were all extinct.

Ramb. Well Gentlemen, we have said enough, and ought to beg the Gentleman's Pardon for saying so much; let's either enter upon another, or adjourn to the *Park*.

Sull. To the *Park* then for an Hours walk, and from thence to the *Funeral*, or *Grief Alamode*.

Crit. Is that Acted to Night?

Sull. For the benefit of *Wilks*.

Ramb.

Ramb. Faith Gentlemen, a very good occasion ; *Wilks* deserves encouragement, because he takes Pains.

Crit. Too much : His Feet never stand still ; he is like the Pendulum of a Clock, perpetually shuffling from one side to t'other ; that affected levity in his Heels renders him as Antick as *Griffin* is Stiff and Formal ; they too make the prettiest *Antithesis* in the World.

Sull. If the Play is not too long we will conclude with a Bottle at the *Rose* : I don't remember much Singing and Dancing in it.

Ramb. 'Twill be over at Nine, and that's good time ; *Alons*—— Waiter, to pay——

Exeunt.

The *Rose* Tavern.

Ramb. **D**Efend us ! what a hurry of Sin is in this House !

Sull. Drunkenness, which is the proper Iniquity of a Tavern, is here the most excusable Sin ; so many other Sins overrun it, 'tis hardly seen in the Crowd.

Crit.

Crit. I hate these tumultuous Houses, where a Man must run the Gantlet between a double Row of vizard Masks, that snatch at your Charity like so many High-way Beggars; the Butchery in the Dog-days is not more offensive.

Sull. This House is the very Camp of Sin; the Devil sets up his black Standard in the Faces of these hungry Harlots, and to enter into their Trenches, is going down to the bottomless Pit according to the Letter.

Ramb. The Comparifon holds good even to the Fire and Brimstone.

Sull. Shall we take a Room? *Dog--- Drawer---* why must we stand here so long?

Draw. O Lard! Mr. Sullen--- We are so full.... *coming Sir....* I don't know where.... *coming Sir, coming....* to put you.

Crit. The House swarms; a Man may sooner catch the Plague here than a Cold.

Draw. Really Mr. Chagrin, I'll do what I can--- *Ounds Sir, coming---* to get you a back Room to be out of this noise; but we are—— *by and by, Pox o'this Bar-Bell, it never lies still---* so overwhelm'd with Women, 'tis work for a Scavenger to keep the House clear.

Crit. Prithee don't overwhelm us with thy Tongue, but put us any where out of

of this Crowd, into the Cellar, or into the Garret, where thou wilt for quietness.

Draw. Oh ! here's a Room empty, the Company is going.

Ramb. Consisting of two Rakes and three Strumpets.

Sull. See another Company is broken up, consisting of four Rakes and two Strumpets : How were they divided ?

Crit. To answer such a Question wou'd be as bad as being of their Company ; 'tis a filthy Proposition.

Ramb. Drawer, prithee go before, and cleanse the Room ; set the Chairs in their places again, and open the Casements, that fresh Air may come in, and the polluted go out.

Draw. It shall be done Sir.

Crit. Foh, the Room smells like a Prison : I wou'd not be answerable for all the Wickedness that has been committed on this Spot, for the best Revenue in *Europe* : Tho' I were as holy as his *Holyness*, it wou'd undo me.

Sull. But did you hear the News ?

Ramb. What News ?

Sull. The Trial between the *Play-Houses* and *Informers*, for *Prophane, Immoral, Lewd, Scandalous*, and I don't know

know how many sad things utter'd and spoken on the Stage.

Cri. Who were the Persons that spoke 'em, and what were the words?

Sull. *Batterton, Brace-girdle, Ben. Johnson*, and others; but the words may not be repeated: Are you so cunning? For ought I know, *Critick*, you're a Spy; they are sly Rogues, they say, and lurk in all Companies for matter of Accusation, that a Man is not safe, tho' he be with the Minister of the Parish.

Ramb. Why, thou scandalous Rascal! dost thou take us for Reformers and Trepanners?

Sull. Nay, I don't accuse you of being any way reform'd; but they say, they have made it criminal to repeat the words; is not that strange?

Cri. Ay by my Faith is't; in time they'll make it dangerous to ask What's a Clock, lest it be interpreted, that at such an Hour a Man has an Appointment with a Mistress. But however, if the Charge was well prov'd against the *Actors*, they ought to be Fin'd; but why not the *Poets*?

Sull. The *Poets* have been in the Pickle already, and now they were for Souping the *Actors*; the two first were fin'd, but the latter was acquitted.

Cri.

Crit. 'Tis fit both *Poet* and *Player* shou'd be corrected for their Immorality; but I do not like the Accusation that passes thro' such Hands; 'tis often a question if it be Truth, and at best there's an allay of Cant and Hypocrisy in their Zeal. I have heard odd Stories of some of the pretended *Reformers*; and 'tis not the worst of 'em; this: That they strole about the Streets at Night in Couples, one shall pick up a Strumpet for the Tavern, use her for his Lust, and his Comrade afterwards accuse her, or compound the Offence for Money.

Sull. I have heard several of that kind, and I believe 'em; nay, I know an Assembly of these Professors in the Strand, that meet once a Week to consecrate new Members, or to confirm the old: and when they have any thing to do for the further establishment of their pious Design, they meet under a Twelve-penny Penalty, and having met, they fall to work, that is, to Prayers; then rise, Men and Women, kiss round, fall into a Dance, be very lewd with one another's Hands, and then conclude with a Bowl of Punch.

Ramb. A hopeful way of *Reforming* truly! But what's all this to us?

Sull. You say true; 'tis too heavy for our

our Conversation: Let's talk of something else.

Ramb. Of the Play we are come from, or of any other: We'll be ty'd to no Subject.

Sull. 'Tis a dangerous Matter to talk of this Play; the Town has given it such applause, 'twill be an ungrateful undertaking to call their Judgments in question.

Ramb. Sure you won't condemn what so many good Judges have approv'd.

Sull. Not directly condemn it: We count that Horse a good Racer that comes within distance: I shall agree with the Opinion thus far, that it is a diverting Play, and that it is writ with Care and Understanding; that the Author's Intentions are noble, and that it is in many places a just and lively Satyr.

Ramb. I hear the Gentleman is a fine Companion, and passes for a Wit of the first Rank.

Sull. By his Play I shall never allow you that: I can allow you this, that he seems a good judge of Comedy; that he has touch'd some things very justly, that his Vices are new, and his Characters not ill drawn.

Ramb. And the contrivance admirable?

Sull. By no means : Tho' he seems to know how to form a Play, yet his Play does not appear very much to justify it : I don't think his Contrivance within the compass of humane Policy ; one Turn in it especially, which is indeed the only turn in the Play.

Ramb. If you are for having every thing in a Play as we have it in reality, that is, according to strict Truth or Probability, a Poet has no more to do than an Historian : Alas, you must allow for Invention, Accidents, Surprizes, Disappointments, Passions and Adventures unexpected, and what not ? Without these a Play will troll on as sleepily as a Sermon or a School Declamation.

Sull. I wou'd have a Play founded either on Truth, or some Story very near it ; *aut Veram aut Verisimilem* ; I wou'd have every Scene made probable, and of force to make an impression on the Fancy : Nor must you say this is not to be done, what d'ee yee think of *Sir Fopling*, *Plain dealer*, *She wou'd if she cou'd*, several of *Shakespear's*, some of *Fletcher's*, all *Ben's* ; these Nature is followed so close, we take the Picture to be the Life ; nor are they less diverting, for being confin'd within Reason.

'Tis in this particular a Play differs from

from a *Romance*; One is the representation of humane Nature, the other represents Nature on the Rack; One shews us what we are, the other shews us what we never can be. If a Poet shou'd jumble together half a dozen Persons into a *Comedy*, bring 'em down from the Clouds in a Machine, and make 'em move and talk by Inchantment, wou'd not the Audience think such a Fellow out of his Wits?

Ramb. Then what do you say to *Dryden's Amphitryo* or *the two Socias*?

Sull. I think it as very and substantial a *Farce* as *Scapin*, or the *Emperor of the Moon*: Nor can all the Authority of Ancient and Modern Poets, not the authority of *Plautus*, or *Moliere*, who wrote on the same Fable, make it otherwise.

Ramb. *Dryden* calls it a *Comedy*.

Sull. I care not what he calls it; if he called it a *Tragedy*, he had assurance enough to bear it out in a Preface; but let him call it what he will, 'tis still as vile *Farce* as ever he rail'd against, and every thing that is so repugnant to Truth or Possibility is the same.

Ramb. Is that all the difference between *Comedy* and *Farce*?

Sull. Not all; there is in the contexture of one and the other a very great difference;

rence; for in *Farce* the Author is not tied to the same severity of Rules as in *Comedy*; *Farce* is more loose and disengaged, not cramp'd by Method, or measure of Time or other Unity: 'Tis a Hodge-podge of Adventures, things reasonable mixt with things unreasonable; the Sword and the Gown, the black Cloak and the Cassock, the powder'd Peruke and the cropt-ear'd Cut, the twisted Steenkirk and the Band of *Geneva*, *Hercules* and the Distaff, and what not? Just as if War were to be waged against Sense and Uniformity, and the *quidlibet audendi* were all that the Poet is to study.

Ramb. And what do you infer from all this?

Sull. I infer, that notwithstanding some Beauties in it, this is not a just Comedy; some things are very well, but the Principal very much amiss.

Ramb. Sure thou art out o'thy Senses; we shall certainly have thee affronted for thy Heresie: Can you pretend to make out what you say?

Sull. Ay, indeed can I, and am ready with my Evidence when you will.

Ramb. Are you of that Opinion too, *Critick*?

Crit. I am directly of Opinion, that the Town is sometimes the worst Judge
in

in the World ; 'tis like the monster *Polyphemus* with one Eye, that sees every thing imperfectly : If this is not so, I wonder how it cou'd applaud a Play with so many Deformities.

Ramb. Hye day ! I have mended the matter finely ; why, you rail worse than he, but positively you are both Mad.

Crit. I hate railing ; but speaking Truth is often now a days so call'd : I am directly of *Sullen's* Judgment in what he says : Many exceptions may be made against it, some of no very considerable moment, but some of 'em fundamental and irreconcilable.

Ramb. Better and better I'faith ; I shall have a fine time on't between you.

Crit. But the better to judge of it, it will be convenient first to take a general survey of it, and then putting the several parts together, sum up the Fable in few Words.

Sull. Pray let us beg that favour of you.

Crit. I observ'd it so attentively, that it's still fresh in my Memory : As well as I can, take the Fable thus.

Lord Brumpton *having lately had a Lethargick Fit, and supposed by all the Family, but Trusty, to be dead, because of that*

Fit; is desired by Trusty to make use of their Opinion of his Death, to observe the Sentiments and Behaviour of his Family, but especially of his Wife, who had been long suspected by Trusty: Accordingly Sable the Undertaker is retain'd in the Secret; and the Plot is carry'd on against Lady Brumpton: Lord Hardy and Campley are intrigued with Sharlot and Harriot, two Orphans in ward with Lord Brumpton, which Ladies live in the House with him, and without any knowledge of the Plot pursue their own Affairs: Cabinet is an old Crony of Lady Brumpton's and still her Creature; the Lawyer and Waiting-woman are little to the purpose. Lord Brumpton takes the hint from Trusty, does as he advises, and continues to let them believe him dead: This gives him opportunities of seeing his Wife's Behaviour, and being at length convinc'd of her Hypocrisie, reveals himself, and after some perplexity about a Settlement, she is found to ha' been formerly marry'd to Cabinet, and so dimist with shame. This is the Plot and the chief Argument; the Amours and the rest are of inferiour consideration, and in the Author's own Phrase, Subaltern.

Sull. You have sum'd it up right, so that the Play runs on the supposition of a Man's death, and under that Circum-
stance

stance the several pranks are perform'd: Now that which seems incredible, is, that a Man of any Rank or Relations, shou'd lye dead so long, and no body see him; that neither his Wife (whose desire of his Death required as full assurances as 'twas possible to get) shou'd not gratifie her cruel Curiosity in viewing him, and confirming her Security; that neither of the Orphan Sisters, who liv'd in the Family, and who were well affected to him, shou'd be desirous to look on him, nor for Satisfaction nor for Sorrow; that a Man of his Quality shou'd be Coffin'd up, and all things provided for the Interment, and not so much as a Friend, a Servant, or the common Searchers inquire after his Death, 'tis strange.

Crit. 'Tis so; but I will tell you what is stranger; and that is, that immediately upon his Death, and all the while the Corps is supposed to lye in the House, the several Intrigues of the Play are carry'd on: First *Sharlot* and *Harriot*, under the same Roof, and at the Moment of his death, are openly drolling and railing each other about their Sweet-hearts; bnt that is not enough, presently *Fardingle*, a Servant in the House, comes in with a Song, and squeals it to

the Lute, while *Campley's* Hat serves for a Desk to lay it on: Is not this an odd Prologue to a Funeral?

Sull. The most absurd contrivance that ever was; and I thank you for the hint; it had escap'd me truly.

Crit. Horace says,

*Infelix operis Summa, qui ponere totam,
Nesciat*———.

Epist. ad Pison.

And what shall we say to the rest when the Foundation is so ill laid! Well, the old Woman not singing it to their Minds, *Campley*, who is a Gentleman of Sense and Manners, is desired to sing it; he presently does it without any excuse or regard to the sad occasion that requir'd another sort of Behaviour, and no sooner is that over, but he Gallants her with his Love in an Air of the greatest levity, and she hears him with all the Pleasure he cou'd desire! then to compleat the Scene, the Widow her self rushes in, and helps out the Conversation and Dröllery.

Sull. That was an unhappy oversight: I have not read any thing so guilty.

Crit. Most abominable: I do not insist upon the Widow's Humour, but her Conduct; as the Character is to render her

her a Hypocrite, so she ought to have dissembled her Joy in the presence of those who were her Enemies: The Ladies had violent suspicion of her Falshood, therefore she shou'd have put on a Face of gloom and melancholy; nor was there in this Scene any occasion to shew her self, much less to display her Joy at such a juncture: This is bad enough, but that the Persons of Probity, as *Sharlott*, *Harriot*, *Campley*; nay even the Lord's own Son, signal for his Vertue and Sincerity, shou'd forget such a doleful Moment, and Burlesk away the Days of Mourning in Mirth and Fooleries of Love, is disagreeable and monstrous.

Ramb. I am of Opinion with you in that; but the Audience was in too great a hurry to mind it.

Crit. The whole Oeconomy of the Play runs on this very point: As I told you, the *Lord Hardy*, who was the Deceased's Son (and by the way, has all advantages of Piety and Honour that the Poet cou'd give him) I say, even he too instead of lamenting his Father's suddain Death, (tho' he had reason enough, for he was to fall into worse Hands) never shews the least concern, nor mentions it but once, and that is, when he remembers he is now cut off from his hopes of
the

the Estate; but instead of fighting for his Father, he only Sighs for his Mistress, and within a Wanscoat of his Father's Corps, with all the gaiety imaginable pursues his Intrigues: The rest of the Action is of a piece, and altogether is unseasonable, barbarous and shocking.

Ramb. I don't know what to say to't; you have reason on your side; for considering the Circumstances every way, it seems a little too much strain'd.

Cri. This reduces this so celebrated Comedy to the indignity of the vilest Farce; and which renders it still more unlike Comedy, is the manner of *Sharlot's* escape out of the House.

Sall. I had that in my Eye with the first appearance of the *Catastrophe*; I thought it too gross for humane Faith.

Crit. You remember how it is: *Lord Hardy's* Men are to set on the Corps as it is to be carried out to the Grave, under a weak pretence of claiming the Administration: *Hardy* does as he is directed, and having seiz'd the Herse, he goes to open it, expecting to see his Father, but out jumps *Lady Sharlot*: This is surprising beyond all belief, that a Lady of her delicacy shou'd be Coffin'd up, and kept close some Hours, without the relief of one gasp of Air; that she shou'd be

be carried out in such solemnity, and by all the terrible Equipage of Death to be put into a condition of dying in good earnest, only to make her escape to her Lover--- if that be *Comedy*, I have done with the Stage.

Sull. It's forc'd for a surprize without any manner of provocation; she might have got out o' Doors in such a Confusion without studying that Artifice.

Crit. Nor has *Cabinet's* discovery of his prior Marriage with *Lady Brumpton* a sufficient Cause; *Trusty* says, he discover'd it because he was frighted with the imagination of seeing *Lord Brumpton's* Ghost; What can be more childish? for a Fellow of his stubborn wickedness to be bubbl'd with the Notion of a Spirit; 'tis boyish and ridiculous.

Sull. One thing more I observ'd: *Sable* the Undertaker, who in the *second Act* was menac'd by *Trusty* for his Roguery and Extortion, goes off unpunish'd, contrary to the Law of *Comedy*.

Ramb. The Poet reckon'd him sufficiently punish'd in having his Men beaten, and the Funeral Procession interrupted.

Sull. How can that be any punishment to him, when he was in that Scene of the *second Act* promised the same Reward

ward for keeping the Secret, as he was to receive for the *Funeral*? and without doubt the Money was paid.

Ramb. How do you know that?

Sull. Because we hear nothing to the contrary: if *Trusty*, who had the management of the Plot had a mind to bilk him, he shou'd ha' told us so.

Cri. This being the Foundation of the Play, it admits of an imputation very different from the Character it has obtain'd: But to make the Author amends, we must own he has touch'd the Humour of some of our modern Widows, and the Knavery of those Undertakers very luckily; this latter is a new Satyr, but the first has once before, and but once successfully, been upon the Stage; as I remember 'tis *Shakespear's Puritan*, or *Widow of Watling-street*, where the dissimulation of these Widows is pleasantly describ'd.

Ramb. I hope you will allow his Incidents to be just, natural, and very satyrical; that of the Lawyer, and that of the *Recruits* are extreamly diverting.

Sull. But that of the *French Manteau Woman* impertinent, and *Campley's* disguise in her Maids Cloths an old trick, ridiculous and unnecessary.

Ramb.

Ramb. If you will not allow the *Plot*, pray what do you think of the *Language*?

Cri. For ought I know the Author may value himself on that Talent; nay, perhaps that sort of writing may in some Mens Opinions be best: but I must acknowledge, whether it be the misfortune of my Ignorance, or love of another kind of Stile, I have no relish for his; nay, I think it altogether improper for Comedy.

Ramb. That's very hard.

Crit. It may be my single Opinion, but it seems to me too concise and stiff: I declare for the plain and easie way of Conversation, where a Man's Mind may be understood without telling his Story twice: and I think such a Dialogue ought to be in *Comedy*, especially in such places where the Hearers are to be prepar'd for some great Undertaking, as in the Scene between *Lord Brumpton* and *Trusty* in the first, and between *Trusty* and *Cabinet* in the fourth Act.

Ramb. You mean that of the Letter which *Cabinet* is supposed to have sent to him.

Crit. The same; I wou'd have you apprehend me right, I do not arraign the Poet for shadowing his Plot; but I may
justly

justly blame him for delivering himself so enigmatically as he meant to puzzle us with a Riddle; his Words do not so much as squint on the Design, nor indeed are they to be well understood; as I remember they are these—*Cabinet* says *I Being born a Gentleman and bread out of all Roads of Industry, I fell into the narrow mind to do so and so* — *Road of Industry* is an odd Phrase, and *falling into the narrow mind*, is Nonsense: I observ'd afterwards that Interview was to back the Letter, which I suppose contain'd the discovery of his Marriage with *Lady Brumpton*. Again, the chief Scene in the Play, which is the opening of the first Plot between the *Lord* and *Trusty*, is obscure; nor cou'd I with all my attention understand what they meant till the Play was almost over, and several Gentlemen who sat near me were perplext with the same doubt. Again, *Trim* tells *Trusty*, that his Lord will *wait him immediately*—Why not wait on him? I hate that affectation of gelding a Sentence, 'tis too starcht and *Laconick* for Comedy. Again, *You are the Man who look'd so pleas'd to see me look so fine to go to Court*, which is ill exprest by all the *so's* and *to's*, and a childish Thought to boot, from a Man of so solemn a Mien as *Trusty*. The
Ex-

Examples are innumerable—— take these two out of the *Prologue* for all the rest.

*Our Author made, a full House to in-
(vite*

A Funeral a Comedy to Night.

The Words are writ and pointed in the *Prologue* as I speak 'em. The next is——

*No in old England nothing can be won,
Without a faction good or ill be done.*

What a forc'd transposition of Words here is! If any Man understands 'em at first hearing, I'll forfeit my Ears for deceiving me.

Sull. What think you of several of his long *Parentheses*?

Cri. In Discourse they are highly improper, because the *Parenthesis* being of a distinct Sense from the rest of the Speech, and having no Mark in speaking to divide one from the other, as there is in writing, they must be confounded together: But there is no need of using any at all; for I'll undertake to talk a whole Day together, and not use one.

Ramb. Nay, now you assume; do you compare your self with the Author?

Crit.

Cri. I understand my Mother Tongue well enough to talk it with the Author, or any body else; I hope there's no great vanity in saying I can talk *English*.

Ramb. If your Vanity ends there, 'tis nothing; but when you undertake to Correct, you must be upon your Guard, and keep your self out of Censure.

Cri. I affirm no more than you, or any body may do in this matter of the *Parentthesis*: I believe I can shew you forty good Plays without one, and you will hardly shew me one good Play that uses them.

Ramb. I shall not mention any Plays; but woe be to poor *Cicero* then; if they are Faults, his Orations deserve to be burnt, for they swarm with 'em.

Crit. I know it, and was ready to obviate your Instance; but those are *Cicero's* blemishes, as some late Writers assure us, and *Scaliger* among the rest: Nor were they his only Vices; his long Periods, as when the Nominative Case and the Verb shall be a whole Page asunder, his tedious Excursions, and I may add, his Affectation, are signal Blots in him: But this does not become us, nor is it to our purpose any further.

Ramb.

Ramb. Did you ever read the *Christian Hero*?

Crit. Yes, what do you mean by asking me?

Ramb. Pray don't be angry. Is it not an extraordinary thing?

Crit. You're enough to make a Man mad : *Grande Sophocleo carmen bacchamur hiatu.* Nothing but Rapture both in Poetry and Prose.

Ramb. How very waspish! Good lack! a Man cannot have a civil Answer to a civil Question.

Crit. Your Question is impertinent, and I begin to be sick o' the Office : But let me hear it again.

Ramb. Not from me Faith, I'm as sick of your Surlinefs, as you can be of my Impertinence.

Sull. Pray Gentlemen, let me stickle; I must have no civil Wars; good *Trinculo* and *Stephano*, share the Island betwixt you, and let me be your Embassador of Peace: I'll propose the Question again; Don't you think the *Christian Hero* an extraordinary thing?

Crit. Look ye Sir ——— to answer you Dogmatically, and in few words. No.

Ramb. Very Dogmatically truly!

M

Sull.

Sull. Come, your reason *Chagrin*, your reason.

Crit. Thus then briefly : 'Tis a Chaos, 'tis a confusion of Thoughts, rude and indigested ; tho' he had the advice of an ingenious Man to put it into Method.

Ramb. Say you so? that's more than I heard.

Crit. 'Tis Dated from the Tower-guard, as a Present to his Colonel, that his Colonel might think him even in time of Duty a very contemplative Soldier, and I suppose by the roughness of the Stile, he writ it there on the Butt-end of a Musquet.

Sull. Hush! no Reproaches; the Gentleman has done very well, and chose a worthy Subject.

Ramb. It bore two Editions.

Crit. It did not; it was but once printed, nor is all that Impression sold; 'tis a Trick of the Bookseller's to get it off.

Ramb. Well, I'm sorry I can't bring you to my good Opinion of the Author.

Crit. And perhaps I don't think much worse of him than you do: I wou'd not take every thing on trust from common Fame; I will exercise my Sense in

in all things, and that shall be to me a Law.

Ramb. What you please; but say what you will, I'll still preserve my Opinion.

Crit. *Anaxagoras* held Snow to be black, what care I for that? Some People have such exquisite fine Notions, they'll prove the Moon shines by Day, and the Sun shines by Night; am I bound to believe what they believe? No Sir, do you think as you will, so will I; but pray let me know the meaning of this piece of Wit, *The first thing after their Death is to take care of their Life.* Is that good Sense?

Sall. He meant that for a Witticism.

Crit. I know he did: But this brings into my Head a Bull of a country Fellow's that I knew, who always when he walk'd over a certain part of the Church-yard, use to say, *If I live and do well, I'll be bury'd in this place.* And of another such Blunderer, who in pious remembrance of his first Wife, and in very good earnest, used very frequently to drink her Health.

Ramb. Stuff Sir, stuff; you know the Author means, it is the care of their Relations, and not of the Dead.

Crit. I don't know what he means, nor am I oblig'd to study a meaning for him: I am sure his words do not interpret his Meaning that way.

Sull. And for a Specimen of his Grammar, take this, *Lady Harr.* says to *Sharl. Lord!* *what signifies Teeth?* There's the singular and plural Number at variance; and pray what is the *English* of this Sentence? reflecting on her easiness of being conquer'd, she says—— *She'll laugh to death to see me out of my Pantofles.* What that barbarous word is to express to the Audience I don't understand; if she means Stateliness and Pride, as that obsolete Term has signified some Ages ago, *Buskins* wou'd ha' been more *a propo*, much more on the Heroick: Again, by and by *Campley* says to his Friend the Lord *Hardy*, *If the Lady were a Cannon, you'd be in the mouth of her.* A Cannon is a strange comparison to a Lady, a very odd Image to express the Beauty and Tenderneſs of a Mistress; and to be in the Mouth of her is as pleasant.

Crit. But the Author hits a notable piece of Gallantry in the *Three hundred Pound Bill*: But why payable to the Man? In all Sense and Reason, that made it a Gift to the Man, and not to the
the

the Master; if honest *Trim* had kept the Money, no common Law in *England* cou'd ha' taken it out of his Hands. Then, in the beginning of the *third Act*, *Trim*, in the narration of his success with *Mademoiselle*, says, *That she being mov'd by these Promises* — wou'd do such and such matters for them, &c. but we hear of no Promises, nor any thing like 'em; it's just become an Intrigue between *Trim* and her, but we hear of no Love nor Lover's Promise.

Ramb. Perhaps it shou'd ha' been *Premises*, and then it had been Sense.

Crit. In the same Act the Lady in her Conversation with Lord *Hardy*, talks of a Brother's Death, whose Memory is dear to her; it seems he dy'd abroad, and she condoles her Misfortune in the resemblance there is between her Lord and her Brother: This, in my Opinion, is not only impertinent, but by no means to be admitted into *Comedy*; such Images are too afflicting, and do not agree with the Nature and Gayety of that kind of Drama: All *Ideas* of distress are to be banish'd, and our Lives only to be represented, with the Humours, Vices, and Vicissitudes of 'em; but our Deaths not to be mention'd, not so much as by Similitude. But as what *Trusty*

says afterwards, that his Father had taught Lord *Brumpton*, the Exercise of Arms, tho' the Lord was a Colonel, and t'other only a Captain in his Lordship's Regiment--- I say, as the Author is a better Soldier than I, it becomes me to submit that controversy to him.

Sull. It seems to me too a little preposterous, but we must acquiesce in that point to the Men of Discipline.

Ramb. But pray resolve me one fair Question, and without Passion: Has he not describ'd the Sextons and Grave-diggers to the Life?

Crit. I believe these Fellows bad enough; and that practice of removing dead Bodies from one place to another, is a most unchristian Roguery; I know it to be true in several Parishes at this end of the Town, and it is a deplorable shame that such Rascals are suffer'd to do so: But I never knew till now, that the *Undertakers* had Farm'd the Church-yards, and bought the Dominion of the Graves and the Dead: I thought their Attendance had ended at the laying down of the Coffin; and that the stripping and shifting the Carcasses from place to place, had been the sole Inheritance of the Officers of the Church. But to proceed... there

there are two or three things more which offend me, and then I have done.

One is, the Popularity and Affectation of that word *Bagatel*; and pray the reason? Because forsooth it sounds prettily, and is *French*, when to say *you trifle*, or you *say nothing to the purpose*, is every whit the same thing: I know a certain Play-writer that uses this word very frequently, tho' he understands no more *French* than-- *Parlez vous François*-- and the Motto round the Garter. Another thing is,

What silly childish Reflections *Trusty* has when he views Lord *Hardy's* homely Lodgings! *Trusty*--- After my good Father's death, the good Lord took me, because he was a Captain in the Regiment, I was I think Three and Twenty when this young Lord was christen'd: What a do there was about calling him Francis! What stuff is this! and from Mr. *Trusty's* oraculous Mouth! What does it all mean, but to tell us *Hardy's* Name was *Francis*, and that he was a *Christian*?

Again, Lord *Hardy* blames his *Mamlukes* for not crying about the Streets... Puff, Puff... Old Shoes to mend... Knives or Scissars to grind... Knives to grind... and this for the helping out a scanty Subsistence: I thought every Officer

had esteem'd his Gentlemen Soldiers above such a beggarly Shift: I insist on this, because I have known a poor Rogue in *Westchester* run the Gantlet only for getting an honest Livelihood by turning Retainer to an Inn in the Fair-time, and drawing Pots of Ale.

My last Offence is--- the *Old Lord's* complaining of the Gout-- But why the Gout? Is there not a good occasion for him to complain of his Head after such a Fit? The Gout is a healthful Pain, and directly adverse to Fits and Swoonings; the anguish will keep his Senses from wandring I warrant it; if a Man shou'd faint when the Gout's upon him, if he shou'd be at leisure to fall into Fits under such a quick Pain, I shall believe a Criminal may sleep on the Rack. But the Author had so little reason to find a new Distemper for his Patient, that I expected he shou'd all along in the Play show'd himself Infirm, and labouring under the Fatigue of his Fit; he ought to discover some remains of his Sufferings, his Spirits cou'd not recover immediately their Vigour, and why then must the Gout be added? When indeed he had found a just excuse for his sitting, if he had appear'd with any Symptoms of his Lethargy. I shall

shall only add this—— and that is—the Lady's mistake of *Merentius* instead of *Mezentius*, as it is in *Virgil*; which for Madam *Harriot's* Reputation, I wou'd have posted up on the *Columna rostrata* now in the Capitol of *Rome*, among the Records of false *Latin* there.

Sall. But pray let us turn the other end of the Glafs, and see what prospect that gives us: And as you have been stringing up his Faults, so give me leave to reckon some things that are well in him: First, he has variety of Characters, and even in the same Character variety of Humour: *Harriot* is a Lady of a spruce Wit, and fiery Mettal: *Sharlot* is Grave and Methodical; the first interview between *her* and Lord *Hardy*, is very Courtly and Passionate: 'Tis true, she degenerates in that Scene of *Billinggate* with the *Widow*, but 'tis a contrivance for Revenge and Mirth. Lord *Hardy* is a Character of a Noble kind; there's the Duty of a Son, the Faith of a Lover, the Integrity of a Debtor, and the Bravery of a Soldier, all comprehended in him: That of *Campley*, has the Air of a Man of Sense, a sincere Lover, and a hearty Friend: *Trim* has the true Impudence of a Man o' Quality's Favourite Servant: *Puz-*

ele is a general Representative of the Inns o' Courts; and *Trusty*, a fine Example of Fidelity in Servants; the waiting Women in their several Faculties, are good Copies of all that Sisterhood; and to conclude all--- *Lord Brampton* is a just Example of a doating, uxorious Husband, and *Lady Brampton* an Epitome of most of the Sex when they become Widows.

Ramb. Ay, this is Civil Mr. *Sullen*; let's have as much of this as you please.

Sull. Then take two or three more: The Visiting Scene is a Master-piece; I prefer it to that in *The Lady's visiting Day* by great odds: The Incidents are many, and all arise naturally from the Business of the Play; there's not one broken Scene in the whole; that Incident of the *Lawyer*, and that of the *Recruits*, I like extremely; and *Lord Brampton's* Advice to his Son and *Campley* in the last Scene admirable. To all this, the Moral is the true result of the Play, not in the least strain'd, as many are.

Ramb. And now you have both given your Judgments, pray take mine: I think the Gentleman who writ this and the *Christian Hero*, to be indued with singular Honesty, a noble Disposition, and a conformity of good Manners; and as he is a Soldier, these Qualities are more conspicuous

spicuous in him, and more to be esteem-
ed: He has a Heart fit for his Employ-
ment, and where he touches the Go-
vernment, which he is a Servant to, his
Lines shine with Loyalty and good In-
struction: My Prayer for him is, That
on all occasions he has to exert his Cou-
rage in the Service of her Majesty, and
the Nation, his Sword may be as suc-
cessful as his Muse.

Sull. I commend your conclusion *Ram-
ble*, and joyn with you in it; it's fit
every Gentleman shou'd be encourag'd
that writes with so good an Intention;
and I commend the good Nature of the
Town, that gave his first Essay such
Approbation; notwithstanding the Errors
we have mention'd.

Crit. I neither envy him, nor reproach
the Town for their Applause; and I am
apt to think we have not nam'd any
of his Errors which he himself was not
conscious of: He does not want that
Understanding which some of his Bre-
thren do, and I hope, if he will divert
us with another, to find it more cor-
rect.

Ramb. I'll answer for him.

Crit. As I am a Friend to such as
write for their Diversion, so I am an
Enemy to those mercenary Scriblers who
get

get their Bread by it: I have always thought it a pity that the *Muses* shou'd be prostituted to every wretched Fellow, that because he lies in a Garret, fancies himself on the top of *Parnassus*: 'Twas never any where thus but in *England*. The *Greek* and *Latin* Poets were Men of Figure in their Country, of Wealth and Reputation; ours, for the most part, the Dregs of the People; some of 'em bred at School upon publick Charity; who proving Rebellious to their Parents and Masters, escape from their Discipline, and for a Shift betake themselves to this Trade: No wonder Poetry lies under such a scandal, to such a degree, that it's become proverbial to say--- *As poor as a Poet*--- when indeed some of 'em were Beggars before they began, and their cursed Poetry serves but to keep 'em poorer.

Sull. 'Tis a sacred Truth, and a violent Infamy to the noble Study: Many a Fellow undertakes to write a Play, when it were much fitter for him to write Journey-work to a News-monger, or an Attorney, or follow any other Vocation more level with his Capacity; but the Trade of Play-writing is now (as we say) one of *Jack's* last Shifts; and as common for a Starving young
Fellow

Fellow with an ill Play to put in for a third Night, as now in the commencement of a War, for a ragged Rascal to run into the Service, for the lucre of the King's *Bounty-money*.

Ramb. Do you know what Play is now in rehearsal in this House?

Sull. I never go near 'em; but I hear 'tis one of his who writ the *Trip to the Jubilee*.

Crit. That's an indefatigable Drudge at the Stage: If he lives as long as *Euripides* did, he will afford us as many Plays; he is as constant every Winter, as Rain and dirty Weather.

Ramb. Pray what is it?

Sull. I have not heard the Name, but am told its intirely *Fletcher's*.

Ramb. 'Tis a sign his Muse is at an ebb; but if he alters it, 'tis a Thousand to One, he spoils it. Which of *Fletcher's* pray?

Sull. *The wild Goose Chase*.

Ramb. But why that? I have seen it Acted with good Applause, and needed no Alteration.

Sull. No matter for that; he vamps it up, and with some wretched Interpolations of his own, passes it for New, but I'll undertake to mark out his from *Fletcher's*, as evidently as I can perceive
the

the River *Dee* runs thro' the great Lake in *Wales*. But now you put me in mind of him, did you hear of a Book of his publish'd this Winter under the Title of *Love and Business*.

Crit. No, I never heard of it; is it of any account?

Ramb. If you have not heard of it, it can be of no great account, that's certain; What does it treat of?

Sull. I read it over hastily, but he has given the buyer variety for his Money: There's Verse and Prose, Love and Travel, Letters and Songs, and what not? 'Tis a Miscellany of every thing.

Crit. His Love is exprest in Verse, and his Business in Prose? Is it so?

Sull. There's Folly enough in it for Love, but what he means by Business is not in my understanding; unless he very wittily turns the Satyr on himself, and by a forc'd Synecdoche means it an *interruption* of business.

Crit. I believe it will sooner prove an Interruption than a Pleasure.

Sull. Part of his Prose consists of his Love Letters, another part of his Trip into *Holland*; and the rest is a Satyr against *Aristotle*.

Crit. How, a Satyr against *Aristotle*?

Ramb.

Ramb. A very curious Confection! That a School-boy of his Years and Capacity shou'd enter into the Lists with *Aristotle*? Amazing! or that he shou'd think his insipid imaginary Love Letters an entertainment for Ladies and Men of Sense!

Sull. No; to give him his due, I believe his Ambition did not aspire so high: He has calculated this, as well as his Plays, for the Meridian of the Galleries, and thinks himself well paid if they like it: I'll say that for him, he has so much Humility, as not to expect that Persons of understanding shou'd be of his side.

Crit. But prithee what does he say against *Aristotle*?

Sull. He plainly says he was an Ass, and knew not half so much Poetry as he knows.

Crit. A pleasant Quarrel o'my Word: I never heard any thing so impudent: Can any body imagine this Fellow ever was at School that knows so little? Is his skill in Poetry so much superior that it shall contradict all others? What a Block-head was *Racine* to spend so much Ink and Paper in vain then! But prithee, what says he of *Horace*?

Sull. I do not remember he says one Word of him.

Crit.

Crit. Oh fie! When he was in the Humour he shou'd have expos'd 'em every one; but especially *Horace*; he was a Critick as well as *Aristotle*; nay, took his very Criticisms from him; had he never read the *Arte Poetica*? That's strange; if he does not understand Latin, he may read it in *English*, done by my Lord *Roscomon*, *Oldham*, or if he does not understand good Poetry, he may read it translated by *Dennis*, which is in as uncouth hobbling Verse as he can desire; therefore 'tis unkind in him to battel *Aristotle* alone, who was not his Match, he shou'd ha' put 'em together, and the conquest wou'd ha' been worth a Trophy.

Sull. You are Merry.

Crit. Wou'd it not make any Man merry to consider these things! For my part I was never more diverted in my Life: Poor *Aristotle*! Thou art become an old Fellow; thy Gray Hairs discover thy age and impotence; here's a young raw bon'd Stripling with a Gooses Quill has disarm'd thee; and thrown thee on thy Back. Thou know'st no more of the Muses for all thy talk, than *Strabo* knew of *America*, and why wilt thou pretend, or thy Son *Horace*, or his Son *Racine*, or his Son *Rymer*? They and you are

are a parcel of Numskulls to this new *African* monstrous Hero.

Ramb. Oh rare *Critick*! This is good sport to y^ee.

Crit. Faith so it is: But I'll hold you any odds this Spark never read a Line of *Aristotle* in his Life; and I much question if he knows whether he writ in Greek or Latin.

Sull. If *Fletcher* had not had the misfortune to be in *English*, he had escap'd this Highway Man.

Crit. What torment do the Ghosts of our old Writers indure from the racks and pains they receive from the new! How are their sacred Ashes disturb'd by every prophane Scribbler! I never contemplate this, but I am pleas'd with that passage in *Blount's* Annotations on *Philostratus*, where he says, That a certain Painter, nam'd *Galaton*, pictur'd *Homer* Vomiting, and all the Poets after him, licking it up: Pardon my ill manners, but it was a good Conceit of the Painter's, for without a Parable, the old Authors have been a mighty relief to the Modern. But enough of this Man and his Works, I desire no more acquaintance with him.

Ramb. Then we will talk of a Gentleman of superior Sense, the Author of several good Plays, Mr. *Vanbrag*.

Sull. Ay, now you have touch'd *Olympus*: He is indeed all that we can say.

Crit. I think he writ *The false Friend*?

Ramb. He did so: But I don't know how it came to pass, that Play did not succeed.

Sull. An unhappy Accident interrupted it the fourth Day: *Cibber* was hurt, and cou'd not act his part.

Crit. I doubt that was not the only reason: I know the Play, and am sorry to say that there are some things in it unworthy that Gentleman.

Ramb. Pray be free and tell us.

Crit. I shall name but two, nor wou'd I mention them in any other Company; I have a veneration for the Author, and wou'd be very loath to say any thing to his injury: But what I mean, are these——The first is——*Wilks* (for I forget the Drammatick names) is marry'd to *Mrs. Rogers*, and the Minute after his marriage, having suddain news brought him of his Fathers approaching Death, he resolves to go immediately there, to take his blessing before he dy'd, and to pay him his filial Acknowledgments. The Journey was to last several Days, and in the mean time having strong suspicion of his Wife's Vertue, he assigns the care of her to his Friend, *his false Friend*, who

who gives the Play the name: This Friend is a Libertine, and in love with her, and now having a good opportunity, he sollicitates the distressed Lady to adulterate her Husband's Bed: She refusing he proceeds to violence, and he struggling for possession, and she for safety, rais'd *Mills* with the noise, who enters in to her relief: They debate the Point with their Swords drawn in the Ladies Chamber, and in the light of their Fury, and with all the apparent Circumstances of guilt in the Lady as well as in the Rivals of the Adultery, *Wilks* comes in with incredible surprize.

My Objection is, How *Wilks* can enter here? His Journey was to last several Days, nor was it feign'd; not many Hours had laps'd since his departure, and we hear of no Interruption by the way to cause him to turn back. Without doubt the Audience thought they had taken their leaves of him, unless some unexpected Accident had happen'd to him: Therefore I conclude his return in this Scene is unseasonable and forc'd for the Surprize.

Sull. I remember the Scene, but remember not the least hint that his Journey was a pretence, nor of any hindrance he met with by the way; which might

easily have been done, and then the surprize wou'd ha' been admirable.

Crit. It wou'd so, and the finest that ever was on the Stage. My second Objection is, his calling it a *Comedy*, when the principal Character in the Play is kill'd; This is a great oversight, either in the Author or the Printer, but I am more inclin'd to impute it to the latter.

Sall. Mr. *Vanbrug* is a Man of that able Sense, that he wou'd not run into an absurdity without very great temptation: *Wilk's* coming in, in the Crisis of so terrible a Scene, tho' it was irregular, yet it gave the Audience infinite astonishment, and indeed for the sake of that beauty we may forgive him the breach of Unity. The other mistake is too palpable to be his.

Ramb. But Gentlemen— Why do we fall foul only on this *Theatre*? Are the Plays so pure in *Lincolns-Inn-fields*, that nothing can be said gainst 'em?

Sall. They have had very few there this Winter: And last Year the *Ladies visiting Day*, and *the ambitious Step-mother*, divided the Winter between 'em.

Ram. Shall we not look into those Plays?

Cri. The first was very popular; but when I saw it, I cou'd not meet with that

that Satisfaction I expected ; I found it a lose unjoynted huddle of Intrigue and Description ; partly Humour, partly Satyr, very little Wit, and no Moral.

Sull. I think it far short of the Character it obtain'd, I mean of the Success, for many went to see it that did not like it.

Cri. Nor does *The ambitious Step-mother* owe its Reputation to the merit of the Drama so much as to the purity of the Language, and the novelty of the Author : It's well writ indeed, but there's nothing in the Play that merits our Attention. He seems ambitious of following *Otway* in his Passions ; but, Alas ! how far off ?

Ram. If you are a Man of any sincerity, *Critick*, you will allow that Tragedy has many beautiful Scenes,

Cri. I think very well of the Play of and the Author, and believe he will be able to show us Wonders in time ; But I must be free with you, I think the Business of his Tragedy very trivial, and that there's nothing extraordinary in it but the Stile.

Ramb. But pray, Gentlemen, while it is in my Head, have you heard any thing

of a Comedy of *Dennis's* here this Winter?

Sull. Not a Word.

Crit. Nor I: I've heard nothing of him since his *Iphigenia*: I thought that had mortify'd him for ever writing again.

Ramb. Not at all; he has a Heart of Oak, nothing but Thunder and Lightning can pierce him.

Sull. But what is it *Ramble*? his own or borrow'd?

Ram. Borrow'd, Sir, he begins to despair of his own strength, and therefore strikes in with a Confederate: 'Tis compounded of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and some Alterations of his own: So much as was *Shakespeare's* was lik'd, but all his own damn'd, and for his sake the whole Play soon afterwards.

Sull. So it dy'd like an Abortive Bastard.

Crit. These repeated Disappointments, I hope, have cur'd him of the itch of Play making: Let him stick to his Criticisms and find fault with others, because he does ill himself.

Ramb. But let us return to *Lincolns-Inn-fields*, and see what they are doing there.

Sull.

Sull. The Tragedy of *Tamerlane* is put up.

Ramb. That's the same Author's as the *Stepmother*, and truly I think he may stand the first Man in the List of our present Dramatists.

Crit. As I said before, he has excell'd all his Cotemporaries in correctness of Language; but in that I have said the best part of him.

Ramb. I wonder you will talk at that rate; he has many Excellencies besides.

Sull. He has so, tho' *Criticks* ill nature will not suffer him to speak well of any body.

Crit. You're mistaken; I've not so much ill nature as you imagine; nor will I to the best of my knowledge pass an unjust censure on any Man; but 'twere impious to offer it to this Gentleman. Pray send for his Play.

Ramb. 'Tis here; I hug it as *Alexander* did *Homer*, or as *Ben Johnson* *Horace*, I always carry it about me.

Crit. Pray lets see it: I read it t'other Day very carefully, and made some slight Remarks.

The Epistle is inscrib'd to my *Lord Hartington*, but the Panegyrick is altogether apply'd to the *King*. *My Lord* has so little share in it, that if we did not see his

Name, we shou'd not believe it his ;
Let me read it over t' yee.

Ramb. Read it over? You need not give your self that trouble, I have it every Word by Heart.

Crit. Not that I blame him for any thing he has said in favour of his Majesty, but his Complement is strangely out of place: How rude wou'd it seem from a Lover in his Mistresses Company, to forget his devoir to her, and to entertain her with the description of another fine Lady? Wou'd that be Gallant? My Lord, to whom he writes, is with him of little Consideration, but he is extasy'd with his Passion for the King: With submission, he might have taken another occasion to Epistolize his Majesty, and Address'd my Lord *Hartington* with more candid Civility.

Sull. My Lord is a Gentleman whose Character will bear a Complement without the imputation of Flattery; nor cou'd the Author have chosen a Patron of greater Abilities. But some things may very well be question'd in his Epistle.

Ramb. Hush: That's no Business of ours; But you were going to speak, *Critic.*

Crit. I was going to say, that because we all run away with a great Opinion of this Author's Stile and propriety of Words,

Words, it may be matter of some curiosity to examine that Truth, and try if he be so infallible as we believe him. Let me direct you to two or three places, not, that I expect to find any thing that wou'd be worth mentioning in any other Poet, but in a Poem so very beautiful as Mr. *Roe's* the least spots may be seen, as we say freckles are plainest discover'd in the finest Skins.

The Epistle it self presents us with one Phrase which is worth repeating, it is this—— speaking to my Lord he says-----
I think your Lordship ought to give intirely to publick Affairs--- The Sense ends there, and the blot I mean is—— *giving intirely.*

————— *Brevis esse laboro,*
Obscurus fio —————.

Ramb. How do you know that is not the Printer's fault?

Crit. Because I meet with many of the same sort; but take another Instance----- speaking now of the King, he says--- *I can hardly run back to his having sav'd his own Country---* that Participle *having* makes the Sentence rough and ungrammatical; it either shews the Author very
 lazy

lazy or very unknowing; when with a little trouble he might have said the same thing another way----- as, *I can hardly run back to the safety he gave his own Country*— that Substantive had made it smooth and strenuous.

Ramb. This is as very a trifle as ever *Dryden* and his Club publish'd against the *Empress of Morocco*.

Crit. 'Tis not of much importance truly; but I say out of so correct a Poem as this, 'tis worth our curiosity to pick what we can to shew he's not without fallibility.

Ramb. I shou'd rather think it ungenerous to censure a Man of such approv'd worth for such Trifles.

Crit. I mean him no Injury upon my Word; I honour him as much as you do, but perhaps on better assurances of his Merit; you take up a Friendship for him on account of his Fame, but I have enter'd into his Deserts, and judg'd him without partiality.

Sull. But how do you prove that last Sentence ungrammatical?

Crit. I always make it a Rule in my Judgment of an *English* Phrase, to try, if as it is in the *English*, it can be literally translated into Latin: This is the best way to fix our *English* Concords, Moods
and

and Tenses : Allowing this—— - Pray translate that Sentence, and try how it will run.

Sull. I cannot say 'twill be so elegant as t'other way, but it has always been allow'd.

Crit. I dare say you can't shew me in *Dryden*, *L'Estrange*, *Archbishop Tillotson*, present *Bishop of Rochester*, nor in any writing of eminency one Instance to justify the allowance of it : But 'tis not worth any more Words.

Ramb. Pray go on ? What have you more ?

Crit. Another blemish in his writings is--- he concludes a Sentence with a *Parenthesis*, which is directly wrong : A *Parenthesis* has no Period ; it always stands in the middle of the Sentence, and the very Etymology of the Word directs us how to use it.

Ramb. Whereabouts is that ?

Crit. 'Tis here, toward the bottom of the second Page of the Dedication : But now I'll turn into the Play.

Moneses says--- *hast me to find the place--* Why *me* after *hast* ? 'tis an expletive not only unnecessary, but it makes the Line Nonsense. Again, in p. 38. the same--
Tam. says--- *I fear me--- thou outgoest, &c.--* there's *me* after *fear*—— how can that
be

be render'd into *Latin*? No manner of Interpretation can make these two Orthographical.

Ramb. They are *Anglicisms*, a common way of speaking.

Cri. A very improper manner it is, nor can it by being an *Anglicism*, be therefore excus'd in Tragedy, not only whose Thoughts, but whose Expressions ought to be Sublime. Again, backwards p. 19. *The Mind grows rough and loses all her firmness.* Why *her*, Mind is of the masculine Gender; if he had said Soul, *her* had been proper. P. 64. *Arp.* says.... *Her mind is come within the Ken of Heaven.* *Ken* is too *Scottish* and familiar for Tragedy: *Laggard in the Race.* I hardly believe that to be an *English* word. I will not be too particular: But I can't forbear taking notice how fond he is of *Face of Death, Face of Battle, Face of Danger*; 'tis a good Phrase, but he uses it too often, no less than four times in this Play, which is too much for one *Metaphor*. *Virgin Youth* is repeated very frequently; *late Posterity* as often, and thrice he introduces the Comparison of the fallen Angels.

Sull. These are over-sights, but hardly worth reckoning.

Crit.

Crit. I say so too; but you see he is not infallible.

Ramb. I fancy you'll find very few of your Opinion in these Remarks.

Crit. I appeal to all the World if these are not Blemishes: I appeal to the Author himself; not that I oppose 'em to his Merit; I say again, they are not of that force as to come into competition with the rest of his Language; I only hint 'em from the provocation you give me. But to be very sincere with you, I must needs say I do not see that Magnificence either in his *Drama* or in his *Words*, that bears it up to the mighty Reputation it has: The thing is very well, but you must pardon me if I can't conceive so loftily of it as others do. I have read twenty Tragedies that have pleas'd me more, for I never can consent to range it among some of *Shake-spear's*, some of *Dryden's*, some of *Lee's*, notwithstanding all his Rants, or some of *Otway's*, notwithstanding his humility and vulgarity of Expression.

Sull. You must allow something for his Youth and Inexperience.

Crit. And yet for all this I will allow you, that neither his Youth or Inexperience have injur'd him so much, but his Play might claim an elder Author;

nor

nor need any of them I have nam'd
 ha' been aſham'd to own it; but ſtill
 my Friends, you muſt grant me, there
 is not that Vivacity, that Spirit, that
 Fire, which is in *Lee*, or *Dryden*, that
 Variety which is in *Shakeſpear*, nor that
 Power of moving that we feel in *Otway*:
 I don't read it with that concern either
 of Terror or Compaſſion which theirs
 give me: Upon the Stage it may ap-
 pear well, but he had ſome of the beſt
 Tragedians in the World to Act it, and
 who knows not the Advantage a Play
 receives from their Mouths? Who knows
 not the effect of *Batterton's* fine Action?
 Who is not charm'd with *Mrs. Barry*?
 What Beauty do they not give every thing
 they repreſent? Still don't miſtake me
 Gentlemen; I am not ſolliciting againſt
 the Poet's Merit, but am inſinuating t'ee
 how many an indifferent Play has had
 good ſucceſs when theſe Perſons have
 been concern'd in it. I wou'd as ſoon
 as you ſtand up for this Gentleman's Ap-
 plauſe; for indeed, conſidering the degene-
 racy of our preſent Poets, Mr. *Roe* has the
 faireſt Pretence to ſucceed *Dryden* in *Tra-*
gedy of any of his Brethren, excepting
 none; and may he prove as I wiſh him...
Spes altera Romæ.

Sull.

Sull. If you have done, give me leave in opposition to those inconsiderable Faults which you have mention'd, to tell you what I think very fine in him.

First, he has describ'd *Bajazet* most exactly as the Histories have left him; a Man of stern invincible Ambition, Rage, Cruelty, Atheism, and an Insensibility to all Impressions of Friendship and Generosity: He has drawn him as if he had liv'd in his Court, and been the intimate of all his Passions: There is not one false Line in the whole Picture. On the other hand, he has describ'd *Tamerlane* as his reverse; that is, he has made him Mild, Tractable, Generous, Humble, Serene, and Compassionate; Brave without Ostentation, without Superstition Religious; that Hero in all Records, is delivered just such a one as he has made him, allowing something for the shadowing and ornaments of Poetry. *Axalla* is a fine Copy of the Soldier and the Lover; *Moneses* is a Character of Distress: *Omar* and the *Dervise* are good Descriptions of all Malecontents in the State and Church: *Arpasia* awakes us with her great Spirit, and *Selima* softens us with her Tenderness:

ness: Every one in its kind is well,
and altogether excellent.

Crit. Very good; then I reply thus...
That *Tamerlane* with all his Humility,
has an allay of vain Glory in several
Speeches where he extolls the Vertues
of a true Mussel-man, by adducing them
all to himself; sundry Lines in his Part
wou'd be better from the Mouth of
another: Again, the Characters of *Ar-
pasia* and *Selima* are too much a-kin;
there's so great a resemblance between
them, that with very little alteration
they might change Parts; they are both
Lovers, and are both belov'd; and their
Distress turns with the same Spring;
they two and their two Lovers are mi-
serable without variety: *Axalla* loses
his Mistress because of her Obedience
to *Bajazet* her Father, and *Moneses* des-
pairs of his, because she was Marry'd to
Bajazet; so that both suffer on account
of their Mistresses alliance to the same
Person, and almost for the same reason.

Again: The Marriage of *Arp.* to *Ba-
jazet* is not well describ'd; she tells *Mo-
neses* the Priest pronounc'd the Marrriage
Rites, but she consented not: How
then was it a Marriage? All Religions,
Pagan, Mahometan, as well as Christian,
require in Wedlock the Consent of both
Parties;

Parties, for if one stands Obstinate, the Rites are stop'd; and to render it still more improbable, the Histories of the *Ottoman* Emperors tell us, that the *Sultan* never Marries her who is in his Power, till by her Assiduities, Artifices and Cunning, and the Desire of being chief *Sultana*, she infatuates him; backing all these with her Charms, to gain the Empire of the Seralio, and to domineer over the rest; several Examples prove this, as we may read particularly in the Story of this very *Bajazet's* Grandson.

Ramb. Are you sure of that?

Cri. I refer you to the *Turkish* History. But to proceed..... *Bajazet's* surprizing the Christian Princes, is an Improbability of the same Nature with that we mention'd in the *Generous Conqueror*; that is, that a Treachery of so fatal a nature, in the centre of *Tamerlane's* Camp, shou'd be conspir'd, nay perpetrated, without the least noise; that all Parties shou'd so universally agree, even in the Face of their conquering Emperor, in the minute of Leisure and Peace, when the least Eruption might alarm the Camp; when *Tam.* had such assur'd Experience of his Enemy's mischievous Temper.... I say, 'tis a little strain'd beyond Policy and Belief.

O

But

But that which surprizes me most, is *Tamerlane's* offering him his Liberty and Empire, on the Condition of his future Friendship, when the very reason of this War arises from *Bajazet's* Perfidy; this Circumstance, I think, makes *Tamerlane's* Generosity little better than Frenzy: But the Story in *Ricaut* and *Knolles*, don't say a word like it. I might add to *Arpasia's* Character, that her pretended Christian Vertue is nice to a folly; she might ha' renounc'd *Baj.* with a good Conscience, and gone back to *Moneses* who was first Marry'd to her, which renders the second Marriage null: Or if she grew desperate, to ha' kill'd her self wou'd have imply'd as little guilt as wishing so impatiently to die, for dying and desiring to die is the same in a religious Sense, and the latter as well as the former, makes her a *Felo de se*. I shall urge no more....

Ramb. You have urged enough in all Conscience; too much indeed, for I can't agree with you that half of what you have said are Faults in him. But pray answer me this.... don't you think there are many fine Lines in it?

Crit. Yes indeed, I do think there are many fine Thoughts, some shining Sentences,

tences, and several Reflections very Beautiful.

Ramb. I know some People who think the Author had a double Object in view when he writ it; and that most of his Characters are assimilated to some great Persons now living.

Crit. Those People are of a greater Penetration than I, I must confess.

Ramb. Nay, there is a manifest Similitude in *Tamerlane*, *Bajazet*, *Axalla*, and *Omar*, to some that we can name; and the Author seems apprehensive of it in the beginning of his Epistle.

Sull. I hardly believe he had any Person in his Eye when he drew the Scheme but his own People, nor in the Writing, but the Actors.

Ramb. Well, let that pass; and if you have nothing more to say, return my Book.

Sull. You forget what we propos'd at our first meeting.

Crit. What's that?

Sull. To consider some things of the Author's who writ the *Mourning Bride*: How d'ee stand inclin'd to that now?

Crit. I am tir'd with the Dru'gery of my Office: Besides my Forces are so weaken'd already, I have not strength enough left to incounter such a gigantick Author

Ramb. What, not *The way o'the World*? as weak as I am, I dare appear against that.

Sull. 'Tis not so easy a matter as you imagine: That Comedy cost Mr. *Congreve* (as some say) two Years study.

Ramb. I have known a better writ in a Month; *Ben's Fox* was begun and finish'd in that time: *Shadwel's Libertine* was writ in One and twenty Days; nay, I have seen a very modern Comedy which the Author says he writ in ten Days.

Crit. Ten Days? sure his Thought ran as fast as his Pen; it will ask that time to Transcribe one. Pray what do you call that hasty Play, and what became of it?

Ramb. I shall put you out of Humour if I tell you.

Crit. No, prithee name it.

Ramb. *Courtskip Alamode*; the Author, one *Crawford*, a *Caledonian*.

Sull. I remember it, and its Adventures; it was enter'd into the *New-House*, at the Recommendation of a certain *Scotch Lord*, and sojourning there six Months to no purpose, it travell'd afterwards to the *Old-House*, where it was with much ado Acted.

Ramb. And Damn'd--- there I was in with you.

Sull. Shall we say nothing then to Mr. *Congreve*?

Crit.

Crit. Pray excuse me: I stand very well with that Gentleman at present, and shall be very forry to incur his displeasure.

Ramb. Oh fie! this is partial ———

Crit. Besides, he has done with the Stage, and is (in a poetical Sense) in the circumstances of the Dead; so let him sleep in peace.

Ramb. Come, 'tis too soon to part, 'tis but just Eleven: How shall we spend the other Hour?

Crit. At home by my consent: 'Tis time to break up.

Ramb. What think you of the *Modish Husband*?

Crit. I don't think at all of it; 'tis satisfaction enough to me that the Town has Damn'd it.

Ramb. Oh but he won't allow that Sentence to be just.

Crit. I never knew any (whose Plays had been Damn'd) allow 'emselves in the wrong; but as a Brother of the Quill says, *We have examples of bad Plays that have taken, but not one of a good Play that has been Damn'd.*

Ramb. Come prithee *Chagrin* stay the other Bottle; and if you won't talk of the *Poets* pray let's talk of the *Actors*.

Crit. Away, 'tis too trivial; their Persons are not worth our consideration: I wou'd

wou'd as soon Contemplate the Corporation of Hackney-Coachmen.

Ram. But their Action may : Put in *Sullen*.

Sull. This I must say, that even in the baser sort, in Mechanics, there may be some Excellency worthy our Praise : The Grave Author of the *Chronicle of England* did not think it beneath him to record some of the Actors of his time among the rest of his Heroes, Sir *R. Baker* by Name.

Cri. If you prevail with me, what do you ask ?

Ramb. Nay, nothing but thy Company dear Rogue--- but let us talk of something.

Crit. 'Tis a sign you're at a shift for Discourse, when you'l chuse such a wretched Subject.

Ramb. Well, of all the Men and Women upon Earth, commend me to the immortal Pair, *Batt.* and *Barry*.

Sull. Of all the Men and Women upon the Stage you mean.

Ramb. Ay, either the *Englisb*, or any Stage in *Europe*,

Sull. They are indeed excellent, and what is stranger, never to be worn out.

Crit. I doubt you're mistaken there, for *Batt.* wears away apace ; his Activity is at an end, and his Memory begins to die.

Ramb. But there's a young one to succeed him, *Verbruggen*.

Crit.

Crit. A fellow with a crackt Voice:
He clangs his words as if he spoke out
of a broken Drum.

Ramb. Ay but *Powel*...

Crit. Is an idle Fellow, that neither
minds his Business, nor lives quietly in a
ny Community.

Ramb. And Mrs. *Bracegirdle*...

Crit. Is a haughty conceited Woman,
that has got more Money by dissembling
her Lewdness, than others by professing it.

Ramb. But prithee look o' this side;
there's *Cibber*, a Poet, and a fine Actor.

Crit. And one that's always repining at
the Success of others, and upon the Stage
makes all his fellow Actors uneasy.

Sull. But *Penkethman* the Flower of--

Crit. *Bartholomew*-Fair, and the Idol
of the Rabble. A fellow that over-does
every thing, and spoils many a Part with
his own stuff.

Ramb. Then there's the Noble *Ben*'s
Namesake--

Crit. Is or might be a good Comedian,
but he has the Vice of all Actors, he's too
fond of his own Merit.

Sull. Oh but *Bullock*-----

Crit. Is the best Comedian that has trod
the Stage since *Nokes* and *Lee*, and a fellow
that has a very humble Opinion of himself.

Ramb.

Ramb. There's Mrs. Rogers, Mrs. Oldfield, Mrs. Verbruggen—

Crit. The last is a Miracle; but the others meer Rubbish that ought to be swept off the Stage with the Filth and Dust.

Ramb. Then you allow very few to be good.

Crit. They don't deserve it. Pray Gentlemen let's have no more of this; for to say all in few words--- I wou'd not in this season of Pennance desire a greater Affliction, than to sit three Hours at a Play of *Dursey's*, that shall be acted by some of these that you have nam'd.

Ramb. Then we'll close the reckoning with one Brimmer to the Reformation and Amendment of the Stage—

Sull. Take in the Poets too.

Crit. Ay, so you had need-- come about with it-- so-- good Night to the *Theatre Royal*.

Sull. And to *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* too?

Crit. To both, till I have a better Temptation to bring me there.

Ramb. We'll part at our Coaches... here Drawer... The House is now as silent as *Newgate* after a Goal-delivery.

Exeunt.



